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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS

THE INFLUENCE

of

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

on

COLERIDGE and WORDSWORTH

by

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(B.S., BOSTON UNIVERSITY 1936)

submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1939

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The Influence of Dorothy Wordsworth on Coleridge and Wordsworth

Chapter I. Introduction

The influence of Dorothy Wordsworth on Coleridge and Wordsworth is a very important one and it can be definitely traced through the study of Dorothy's letters and journals as well as in the writings of both men. It is only natural that her influence on her brother should be greater and cover a longer period of time, but during the period when Coleridge shared her companionship with William, Coleridge did his finest work. Dorothy's influence, as we shall see, was not an entirely literary one although her writings possess their own particular charm. Her greatest gift to William and Coleridge was that blend of affection, admiration and faith in their ability which she supplied as wholeheartedly as she looked after their physical wants and acted as their audience, amanuensis and critic.

In tracing the influence of Dorothy on these two men, I have chosen to write this paper along biographical lines in order to show the reader how Dorothy's influence began, how it developed, and its tremendous value in the lives and writings of the Coleridge and Wordsworth. For the biographical studies of Dorothy Wordsworth, I am particularly indebted to Miss Maclean's study of the early life of Dorothy Wordsworth¹ and to the very

1. C.M. Maclean Dorothy Wordsworth

complete biography with its wealth of quotations which Mr. DeSelincourt² has written. I have emphasized in the early life of Dorothy Wordsworth only those parts which I think, are necessary to a better understanding of her character and personality, and have tried to stress particularly those periods in which her influence on her brother and Coleridge may be clearly seen and understood.

"Behold, within the leafy shade,

Those bright blue eggs together laid!

As on the chance-discovered sight

Glanced like a vision of delight.

I started -- wondering to see

The form and sheltered bed,

The Sparrow's dwelling, which, built by

My Father's hand, in wet or dry

My sister Emmeline and I

Together visited.

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Chapter II

The Early Years

William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were born at Cockermouth, England of good Yorkshire stock in the years, 1770 and 1771 respectively. In age little more than a year apart, in temperament alike yet different, they were ideal companions. Both were affectionate, sensitive, excitable; but to the rougher and more passionate nature of the boy, Dorothy brought tenderness, delicacy, and even quicker perception. The few loving records of her childhood preserved for us by William bear witness to that abnormal sensibility, that union of alert vision with instinctive sympathy which only grew with the years.¹ In recollection of their short childhood together, he wrote "The Sparrow's Nest" which gives us a charming picture of Dorothy:

"Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started -- seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
Together visited.

1. DeSelincourt - Dorothy Wordsworth pp. 4-5

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, the wishing, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.²

In the last six lines he tells us specifically how Dorothy has helped him when he says:

"The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy."³

The childhood days which William and Dorothy spent together, however, were very short. When William was eight and Dorothy, six, their mother died very suddenly and at her mother's dying request, Dorothy was placed under the care of her cousin, Elizabeth Threlkeld, in Halifax, and William went to Hawkshead Grammar School. Not the least of the debts which Dorothy owed to her mother was this wise provision for her future. Elizabeth Threlkeld, from all evidence, was a woman of alert intelligence, wide culture, and shrewd common sense. It is clear that to the precepts, and still more the example of her dear "aunt", as she called her, Dorothy owed the development of much that was best in her character: -- her strong sense of duty, her unselfishness, and her ready⁴ delight in the service of those she loved.

2. Wordsworth's *The Sparrow's Nest* p. 262 *Complete Works*

3. *Ibid*

4. Selincourt - *Dorothy Wordsworth* pp. 7-9

The looked at it and seemed to think it
 something, the object, to be near it
 and near to the man, with this
 a little distance away from him.
 In the last six lines he tells us especially the story
 and helped him when he was
 the distance of the water from
 was with the water.
 The have the eyes, the eyes he saw;
 and again came, and called it back;
 a heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
 and love, and thought, and love.
 The children were with him and they spent together
 however, were very small. When the water was right and flowing,
 and, their mother had very tenderly and in her arms she tried
 to keep, looking at the water and the water of the water.
 Elizabeth Tinsley, in the water, and William went to the water
 to her mother was this the provision for her future. Elizabeth
 Tinsley, from all evidence, was a woman of great intelligence,
 the culture, and a good common sense. It is clear that to the
 protection, and with some knowledge of the water, and the
 called her, from the water, the development of them that was left
 in her of water: -- her strength was of the water, her intelligence
 and her mother's belief in the service of them the water.

Elizabeth Tinsley's best friend, William Tinsley
 Elizabeth Tinsley - London, 1875

While her education did not include the elegant accomplishments, she did, through her reading, acquire a fine taste for the best things in literature and that easy mastery of language and happy sense for the right word which distinguished her later writing. The letters which she wrote as a girl of sixteen are remarkable for their correctness and maturity of style. Although her small library contained, at the age of sixteen, the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Fielding, and Homer's "Iliad" and "Odyssey", books never came first with Dorothy. Halifax was a social place and she had plenty of gay companions for games, dances and country rambles. Dearest of these was Jane Pollard with whom Dorothy struck up a passionate friendship of girlhood. But Dorothy's devotion to Jane differed from the common run of such attachments in that it lasted all their lives. It is from her letters written to Jane Pollard after she left Halifax that we get most of our knowledge of Dorothy's life. Dorothy was a great favorite at Halifax, impulsive as she was in manner and movement and quick in response to all that was going on about her.⁵

However, when she was sixteen she was summoned from Halifax to live with her grandparents at Penrith. Her father had died three years before; his little fortune was in the hands of the despotic Lord Lowther and doubtless, her guardians thought it

5. Ibid pp. 10-16

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to live with her grandparents at Pennington. Her father had died

three years before; his little fortune was in the hands of the

despotic Lord Lowther and doubtless, her guardians thought it

was high time she did something useful. Dorothy's grandparents, the elderly Cooksons, were the type who resent a child's irrepressible vitality and try to curb a youthful spirit by fault-finding. Her first weeks at Penrith were miserable and unhappy and her one ray of hope was the return of her brothers for the holidays. When they did come, she had three happy weeks spent chiefly in William's company whom his grandparents regarded as moody and headstrong.

From the days of their childhood at Cockermouth, Dorothy loved William passionately. A touch of wildness in him made him all the dearer and she never looked at him without thinking of Beattie's words

"In truth he was a strange and wayward wight

Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.

In darkness and in storm he found delight."⁶

Her love did not require words. It was sufficient for her to see him; it was exquisite just to know he was near. The violence of her affection satisfied her.⁷

Dorothy's influence on William began, I think it is safe to say, at this date. In the beginning it was the depth of understanding which she gave him which helped him to a better knowledge of himself. The world around him had always aroused in him the keenest feelings, overwhelming him, at times, by day,

6. Beattie, Blair, and Falconer Poetical Works. The Minstrel Book I Stanza 22 Lines 1-3

7. Maclean, Dorothy Wordsworth pp. 19-20.

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G. Beattie, Blais, and Palmer. Poetical Works. The Minstrel

Book I. Stanza 82 lines 1-3

V. Maclean, Dorothy Wordsworth. pp. 12-20.

and filling his sleep with tumultuous dreams by night. Sometimes he was tempted to put his feelings into words, but when he realized that he alone among his friends had these feelings, he had been half ashamed of them and tried to repress them. Dorothy's companionship changed all this, for he discovered that she, too, was moved by the beauty of the world about her much as he was. She did not need to tell him of this. The rich light of evening seen on the trees and woodland paths, the sunlight reflected in moorland pools, the bare majesty of a crag outlined against the skyline, the meadows suddenly dyed to the most delicate green by the summer rain would bring a light to her eyes which told William better than any words could do that in his sister Dorothy he had found the companion whom he had been seeking.

He found that he could talk to her about things which, hitherto, he had not been able to put into words, and as he talked he forgot to be ashamed of those poetic hauntings which, at times, seemed to him the most real things in the world, and at other times, sheer madness. She had a way of looking at things which made him feel as if she were making him see a new world. He loved her stories. She told him of the coming of the Threlkeld family to Halifax, and this with its hint of old days and old ways pleased him greatly. Another of Dorothy's stories which charmed him was the story of a cottager's little daughter sent out in a snowstorm from her father's cottage near Sterne Mill Bridge to guide her mother home by the light of a

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old days and old ways pleased him greatly. Another of Dorothy's
stories which charmed him was the story of a cottager's little
daughter sent out in a snowstorm from her father's cottage near
Starnes Mill Bridge to guide her mother home by the light of a

lantern. The child became confused and bewildered and fell into the water near the bridge. The story with its hints of poverty and hardships and straitened ways filled him with a sense of lament, piercing yet shadowy.⁸

Their companionship was broken in August when William returned to Hawkshead, but they had three more weeks together in October when William stayed at Penrith while Dorothy made ready his wardrobe for Cambridge. He left Penrith at the end of the month filled with eager anticipation, leaving nothing to look forward to for Dorothy, but a meager, and joyless routine.⁹ It is very probable that this brief but delightful companionship of brother and sister was the beginning of Dorothy's desire and resolution to dedicate her life to William.

In her letters to Jane Pollard we learn how tedious and boresome she found life at Penrith. But she found two good friends there in Mary and Peggy Hutchinson of whom she writes to Jane later that they were "my sole companions at Penrith, who removed the tediousness of many an hour and whose company, in the absence of my bothers, was the only agreeable variety that Penrith afforded."¹⁰ Dorothy's uncle, William Cookson, proved sympathetic too, and even allowed her to write letters to distant friends in school hours when, fortunately, her grand-

8. Ibid pp. 20-21

9. Ibid p. 21

10. Knight ed. D. W. to J. P. April, 1795 Letters of the Wordsworth Family

latter. The child became confused and bewildered and fell into the water near the bridge. The story with its hints of poverty and hardships and straitened ways filled him with a sense of lament, pleasing yet shadowy.⁸

Their companionship was broken in August when William returned to Haverhead, but they had three more weeks together in October when William stayed at Fenrith while Dorothy made ready his wardrobe for Cambridge. He left Fenrith at the end of the month filled with eager anticipation, leaving nothing to look forward to for Dorothy, but a messenger, and joyless routine.⁹ It is very probable that this brief but delightful companionship of brother and sister was the beginning of Dorothy's desire and resolution to dedicate her life to William.

In her letters to Jane Pollard we learn how tedious and boring she found life at Fenrith. But she found two good friends there in Mary and Peggy Hutchinson of whom she writes to Jane later that they were "my sole companions at Fenrith, who removed the tediousness of many an hour and whose company, in the absence of my bothers, was the only agreeable variety that Fenrith afforded."¹⁰ Dorothy's uncle, William Coleson, proved sympathetic too, and even allowed her to write letters to distant friends in school hours when, fortunately, her grand-

8. Ibid pp. 20-21
9. Ibid p. 21
10. Knight ed. D. W. to J. F. April, 1783. Letters of the Worth Family

mother was in the shop. Despite these friends, her winter was dull and uninteresting but, during the summer, William who was spending his first long vacation from Cambridge at Hawkshead and in wandering about the Lake country visited her once more.¹¹ It was this summer that he mentions in "The Prelude", Already he is beginning to appreciate Dorothy's company for he says,

"and was blest

Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn
Risen on mid-noon, the presence, Friend, I mean,
Of that sole Sister, she who hath been long
Thy Treasure also, thy true friend and mine,
Now after separation desolate
Restored to me, such absence that she seemed
A gift then just bestow'd"¹²

Together they roamed the beautiful country that surrounded Penrith, along the banks of the river Emont and the path through the woods from the old mill below Brougham to the old quarry. On the ruins of Brougham Castle they sat for many an hour:

"When having climb'd

In danger through some window's opened space
We look'd abroad, or on the Turret's head

11. DeSelincourt, "op. cit" pp. 15-20.

12. Wordsworth's Complete Works "The Prelude" Book VI
Lines 195-203.

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 spending his first long vacation from Cambridge at Newstead
 and in wandering about the lake country visited her once more. It
 was this summer that he mentions in "The Prelude", Already
 he is beginning to appreciate Dorothy's company for his sake.

"and was blest

Between these sunny wanderings with a joy

Above all joys, that seemed another world

Risen on mid-noon, the presence, friend, I mean,

Of that sole sister, she who hath been long

Thy treasure also, thy true friend and mine.

Now after separation desolate

Restored to me, such absence that she seemed

A gift from just heaven!"

Together they roamed the beautiful country that surrounded

Pentrich, along the banks of the river Emont and the Tarn

through the woods from the old mill below Brougham to the old

quarry. On the ridge of Brougham Castle they sat for many an

hour:

"When having climbed

In danger through some window's opened space

We look'd abroad, or on the turret's head

11. DeBenedictis, "op. cit." pp. 13-20.
 12. Wordsworth's Complete Works "The Prelude" Book VI
 Lines 193-203.

Lay listening to the wild flowers and the grass,
As they gave out their whispers to the wind.¹³

William, on the moors above Hawkshead at sunrise, had vowed a life to poetry and he made Dorothy very happy by showing her parts of a poem which in his heart he had already dedicated to her. In this poem, "An Evening Walk", he looked forward to the day in which their dream of a home together would come true.

"E'en now she decks for me a distant scene

(For dark and broad the Gulph of time between)

Gilding that cottage with her fondest ray,

Sole bourn, sole wish, sole object of my way;

How fair its lawns and silvery woods appear!

How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear!

Where we, my friends, to golden days shall rise

'Till all our small show of hardly paining sighs

(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)

Creep hushed into the tranquil breast of Death"¹⁴

By this time Dorothy realized it was her place to be always with William helping him with loving sympathy in all that he did. Something in her nature seemed to complement his and without her, it is doubtful whether he would have developed into the great poet which he became. On these delightful walks Mary Hutchinson often accompanied them and thus Dorothy's second great friend-

13. Ibid Lines 211-218

14. Wordsworth op. cit. "An Evening Walk" pp. 345-354.

Lay listening to the wild flowers and the grass,
As they gave out their whispers to the wind.¹³
William, on the moors above Hawkhead at sunrise, had
vowed a life to poetry and he made Dorothy very happy by showing
her parts of a poem which in his heart he had already dedicated
to her. In this poem, "An Evening Walk", he looked forward to
the day in which their dream of a home together would come true.
"Even now she looks for me a distant scene
(For dark and broad the Gulf of time between)
Gilding that cottage with her fondest ray,
Sole hour, sole wish, sole object of my way;
How fair its lawns and silvery woods appear!
How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear!
Where we, my friends, to golden days shall rise
'Till all our small show of worldly pains signs
(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)
Gleep dashed into the tranquil breast of Death!"
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After William's departure for Cambridge in the fall, Dorothy dreaded the long winter ahead with her grandparents, but, to her delight, her Uncle William who had married Miss Cowper was appointed to the living of Forncett in Norwich and invited Dorothy to live with them. For over five years this was her home, and although it was three miles from the nearest village, she found constant happiness in her garden and her walks through the countryside. She had plenty of duties to occupy her time and in the August after she arrived, she even started a small village school. This she afterwards discontinued when the small Cookson family began to appear.¹⁵

In the Christmas vacation of 1790, William spent six weeks vacation at Forncett. She had not seen him in eighteen months, for he had spent his previous long vacation in a walking tour on the Continent and she found a supreme satisfaction just in seeing him again and listening to the stories of his travels.

In the summer of 1792, Dorothy's Uncle William was appointed Canon of Windsor and took up residency there for three months. In a vivid letter to Jane she describes the castle, the parks, the scenery, the social life, and even meetings with the King.¹⁶

While Dorothy was being impressed with royalty, William

15. Maclean op. cit. pp. 23-28.

16. DeSelincourt "op. Cit" pp. 34-35.

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15. Maclean op. cit. pp. 22-23.
16. Desellincourt "op. cit." pp. 24-25.

was in France, aflame with devotion to the Revolution and planning to contribute his energies to its service. His expectations of what it might accomplish were high and they were ruthlessly disappointed. How bitterly he was disappointed, he tells us later in "The Prelude" and the awful scenes of that time of blood and terror which followed were so deeply imaged on his mind that for years afterwards they haunted his dreams.¹⁷ Besides William's interest in the Revolution, there was another tie holding him in France. He had made the acquaintance of Annette Fallon, a charming French girl somewhat older than himself, and his shy nature had warmed to her vivacity. The acquaintance had deepened into passion and Annette was to bear his child. He was practically without income and he felt it was his duty to marry Annette and provide for her. But all attempts to get money failed and, although he stayed until after the child was born, he was forced to return to England in December.

His immediate business in London was to see published his "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" and they came out early in February. His high hopes for fame and profit were disappointed and, at the same time, the declaration of war between England and France cut him off from Annette and gave a shattering blow to his ideals. Though the thought of taking orders for the church was distasteful to him there seemed no alternative as a

¹⁷. Lee, E. Dorothy Wordsworth p. 25

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means of livelihood. He could not honestly accept his uncle's offer of a curacy without confessing his French entanglement and, knowing he had no chance, he finally opened his heart to Dorothy and asked her to intercede for him.¹⁸

Although Dorothy was deeply stricken when she learned from William the story of his troubles, her deep loyalty to her brother would permit no criticism, and she was ready to help share his burden. She wrote long letters of tender and affectionate sympathy to Annette and did the best she was able to make their way easier. It is not difficult to understand how Dorothy's sympathy at such a time must have made her very dear to William.

Canon Cookson, William's uncle, was very severe in his judgment of his nephew, and despite all Dorothy's pleadings refused to receive him at Forncett. This disapproval only deepened her affection for her brother and, already, she had begun to plan for the time when they might always be together.

18. Maclean "op. cit" p. 35

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Chapter III Halifax and the North

In February, 1794, Dorothy and William were the guests of the Rawsons, in Halifax. Mrs. Rawson was Dorothy's beloved "aunt" and Dorothy was very happy in the renewal of this friendship. She was also most happy in the companionship of William. She did her best to stir him out of his depressed attitude by taking him with her everywhere while she revisited old friends and old scenes. Dorothy's lively intelligence, fine character, and natural buoyancy of spirit made a deep impression on all who met her. William, they were willing to accept at something of his sister's valuation. He was not the best company, for he was never at ease among strangers, and now that trouble weighed upon him, he was moody and silent. But, after all, he had moved in a wider world than they, a world in which they were most keenly interested. The Unitarian society of a north country town had more sympathy with revolutionary principles than could be expected of a Canon of Windsor. Moreover, they were quite up to date in their literary tastes and were not likely to have under-rated the poems which William had already published. When they dubbed him an eccentric, young man, it was more in admiration than in censure and Dorothy had the satisfaction of feeling her wonderful brother was appreciated.

This was a very happy time for Dorothy. With William at her side she revisited all those scenes associated with her childhood of which she had often told him and lived over again

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that part of her life from which William had been excluded. In return, she could hear from his own lips all those details of his experiences in France which no letters, however intimate, could have contained, and together they discussed their plans for the difficult future. William, torn as he was by humiliation and remorse, haunted by the sorrows of the broken people he had met, and tortured by some inability in himself to meet and master the stormy times felt a sense of guilt. His impotence made him feel as if he were somehow a traitor to all he held dear. And just as in his earlier life Dorothy had helped him by her deep understanding to express his poetic feelings, this time it was her faith in him alone which gave him hope and healing.¹

Presently there came an offer from Raisley Calvert of quarters at the farm of Windy Brow near Keswick. William was anxious to accept the offer and Dorothy, happy as she was with her friends, thought it an excellent opportunity of spending some time alone with William. The name of the farm suggested that it was just the kind of retreat that would be most delightful to them, and with the coming of spring, Dorothy and William started off on what she called their first "pilgrimage". Taking the coach, as far as Kendal, they started on a two days' tramp to Keswick, a beautiful trip, and to Dorothy, enchanted country. It was a road which was to become most familiar to her and never afterwards could she pass through Stavely without a thrill. Her delight grew in intensity as she caught her

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first glimpse of Winander and of the falls of Rydal of which William sang in a poem dedicated to her. Past Rydal they mounted White Mass Common and soon after breasting the summit looked down upon Grasmere. At the bottom of the hill they passed the very doors of Dove Cottage, little dreaming that it would some day be their home. Windy Brow was half a mile from Keswick and there they spent six weeks in April and May enjoying the beauty of the valley of Keswick and the towering companionship of Skiddaw.²

Here it was that Dorothy had a brief foretaste of the life she had dreamed for the future. Alone or with William she roamed³ the countryside, under his direction read much in English and French, made the acquaintance of several of his old friends and was initiated into her proud task of copying out his new or corrected verses. For William after his long distracted wanderings, had found peace in her companionship, and in the quiet beauty around him, and, once more, gave himself to poetry adding fresh lines to "An Evening Walk" and working hard on the "Incident of Salisbury Plain" which he had conceived the previous year. Their poverty gave an added keenness to their happiness. It amused them to see how far they could cut down the necessities of living and still be happy.

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A slight shadow was cast on this happiness by the disapproval of some of their relatives. Dorothy resented the insinuation of her aunt that William was not a fitting guardian for her and his friends not the most fitting companions. "I affirm that I consider the character and virtue of my brother as a sufficient protection,"⁴ she wrote, and insisted not only on the pleasure it was to her to be with William, but on the privilege it was to be with one from whom she could learn so much.

On leaving Windy Brow Dorothy and William went to Whitehaven where they spent part of May and June. Then Dorothy, out of a sense of duty, spent some time with Aunt Crackanthorpe and Uncle Kit while William went to Penrith. Here he devoted most of his time to Raisley Calvert who was very ill. In August William went to Lancashire, but on his return found Calvert too sick to be left alone. Despite all his care he could not save his friend who died of consumption early in January, 1795.⁵ William's goodness to his friend Calvert, at this time, was amply rewarded as we shall see, and did much to hasten the time when he and Dorothy could make their home together.

Dorothy, in the meantime, was visiting various relatives and, in the April of 1795, paid a long visit to that dear and faithful friend of Penrith days, Mary Hutchinson, who was

4. D.W. to Mrs. Crackanthorpe, April 21, 1791

5. Maclean op. cit. pp. 40-41.

with her brothers on a prosperous farm, Sockburn-on-Tees. Here Dorothy first met Sara Hutchinson, a younger sister of Mary's who was destined to become one of her dearest friends. William made the visit more joyful by joining Dorothy there, and in the friendly atmosphere of the big, comfortable farmhouse, he began to feel a reawakening interest in Mary.

Dorothy returned to Halifax in time to see her friend, Jane Pollard, married to John Marshall of Leeds, on August fifth, but her own plans for the future were unsettled. The idea of returning to the Cooksons, despite their goodness to her and her fondness for them did not appeal to her because William stood in disfavor there. Raisley Calvert had left William a legacy of nine hundred pounds and Dorothy was determined he should drift no longer. She had often heard him say, "What is to become of me, I know not," and she feared that drifting might be the ruin of his life and powers. William, who had been staying for a time with his friend, Basil Montagu, in London, had been invited to become the tenant of a house in Dorset by one of Montagu's friends, John Pinney. She was impatient for William to accept and it was a joyful day for her when on September seventh the inventory of the house was signed.⁶

Again we see the influence of Dorothy on William. In London he had become restless and was beginning to drift into a life which, to him, might have been dangerous. Despite the

6. Ibid pp. 59-61

fact that the country appealed to him more than the city, if he had not had the thoughts of his sister's devotion and companionship to inspire him, it is difficult to say what he might have done at this time.

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Chapter IV Rasedown

William and Dorothy settled in Rasedown in September, 1795 and from this time on, amid all changes of fortune and condition, they were close and life-long companions. Her influence became a molding and education power. They were both in the strength of their youth, that time of radiant enjoyment, bound not only by that most endearing of natural ties, but by tastes, aims, and hopes singularly mutual. In this, their first home, they were all in all to each other. William, in his poetry, was the spokesman of two souls. It was not that Dorothy visibly or consciously stimulated him, but she was one with him, a second pair of eyes to see, a more delicate intuition to discern. Her "Journals" are Wordsworth in prose just as his poems are Dorothy in verse.¹ Her exquisite regard for common things is mentioned in "The Prelude".

"She welcomed what was given and craved no more,
Whatever scene was present to her eyes,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
Through her humility and lowliness,
And through a perfect happiness of soul
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight
For she was Nature's inmate. Her, the birds

1. Lee op. cit. pp1 36-37.

Chapter IV Hasbrouck

William and Dorothy settled in Hasbrouck in September, 1895 and from this time on, amid all changes of fortune and condition, they were close and life-long companions. Her influence became a molding and education power. They were both in the strength of their youth, that time of radiant enjoyment, bound not only by that most endearing of natural ties, but by tastes, aims, and hopes singularly mutual. In this, their first home, they were all in all to each other. William, in his poetry, was the spokesman of two souls. It was not that Dorothy visibly or occasionally stimulated him, but she was one with him, a second pair of eyes to see, a more delicate intuition to discern. Her "Journals" are Wordsworth in prose just as his poems are Dorothy in verse.¹ Her exquisite regard for common things is mentioned in "The Friends".

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1. See op. cit. pp. 38-39.

And every flower she met with, could they but
Have known her, would have loved"²

Basil Montagu sent his motherless son to live with them and he paid fifty pounds a year for his board, but, besides that, the income from William's legacy was the only money they had. However, Dorothy proved to be a good manager and, while Basil took much of her time, she tried to keep most of it for William. They spent many mornings walking through the country which was a keen pleasure to both of them. It had not the luxuriance of Devon, but it had character. The cottages, poor structures of wood and clay that they were, had yet when hidden in the valleys and revealing their lurking places only by wreaths of white smoke, a contrasting suggestion of cheerfulness and beauty. The views of the sea were fine, the hills seen from the distance almost took on the character of mountains. The coming of spring took away the suggestion of bleakness, daffodils appeared in abundance, in May the apple blossoms were everywhere, and, in summer the hills were glorious with broom. They read a great deal together, too, and got through a number of books both in English and Italian. Dorothy was most happy in her quiet life, for she loved Racedown because it was a delight to her to feel she was the maker of a home for William.³

2. Wordsworth op. cit. "The Prelude" Book 12 Lines 158-167

3. Maclean, op. cit. pp. 40-45.

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He, in spite of the realization of their dream of a home together, was at first embittered and despondent. He was writing a good deal and Dorothy was reading what he wrote and helping him by her suggestions and criticisms. But his writing was not of the kind he wished to do. His restlessness, his feeling that the times were out of joint, and his dissatisfaction with the universe were driving him into satire. He intended to publish jointly with Francis Wrangham, the fruits of his splenetic mood with the title, "Imitations of Juvenal". He was at work, too, on a tragedy, "The Borderers". Thoughts of the wastage of war and the cruel futility of the penal laws disturbed him. How and again as he brooded over these things he continued work on "Incident on Salisbury Plain", a poem in which the desolation of the plain was the setting for the greater desolation of the poor creatures, victims of civilization, who suffered upon it. When the mood of pity was uppermost, he turned to another poem called "The Ruined Cottage".

One reason William was not quite happy in his work was that he had a troubled feeling that he was writing without a clear conception of what he wished to do. He had been reading with great care Godwin's "Political Justice", and its clear way of bringing all things to the test of reason troubled him. The things in his life which he most valued, his momentary raptures and exaltations, his sense of communion with the unseen, would not stand their test. Feeling that he could not explain them or rationalize them he had felt that he should discard

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them from his scheme of things as unreal. Yet when he did this, he had little left by which to live. He felt cut off from his source of strength.

Other things pressed upon him. His dreams were still flecked with memories of violence seen and heard. He was worried about Annette whose letters were a constant reminder that the problem of his future was merely shelved, not solved; and the insecurity of his fortune troubled him greatly and sapped his courage. The seclusion of his life weighed upon him, too. He had not been used to solitude and he felt as if it tried him beyond his strength. There were times when he felt himself becoming stagnant; he still wished to write; but much of what he wished to say was far beyond his reach of words.⁴

He was conscious in these days of doubt and fear that his surest anchor was Dorothy's faith in his power to write, and in the value of his writing. She gave him constant assurance that if he accepted the poet's life, he was doing the work it was given him to do, and he need not break his heart over work outside his power.

Dorothy realized that no easy task lay before her. Though she never alluded to it in her letters, her happiness for the first few months must have been tempered with gravest anxieties. Would she succeed in restoring her brother to health and happiness so as to enable him to become the great poet she knew him

4. Ibid pp. 45-46.

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potentially to be? Dorothy had had no experience of such suffering as her brother's. Part of her strength lay in the fact that the "barren, intermeddling subtleties" had never perplexed her mind. But she could sympathize with all the fervor of her passionate heart. A physician of the spirit like a physician of the body can prescribe the needed remedy without having suffered the disease. Dorothy observed the symptoms clearly enough; she knew, as no other knew, what manner of man her brother had been in health; and her love told her that she had within herself the power to restore him. Yet it was not by any conscious effort on her part that she brought about William's salvation. In the end, it was Dorothy's delight in every little thing which she saw or heard which eventually awakened responsiveness in him. Literally she saved her brother's soul alive. William realized his debt to Dorothy and he tells us how in his darkest hour of trial and perplexity⁵

"Then it was
That the beloved Woman in whose sight
Those days were pass'd, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition like a brook
That did but cross a lonely road, and now
Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league,
Maintained for me a saving intercourse

5. DeSelincourt op. cit. pp. 66-68.

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Companion never lost through many a league,
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With my true self; for though impair'd and chang'd
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded not a waning moon:
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name
My office upon earth;"⁶

Loving his sister as he did and with the experiences of his boyhood still dormant within him, delight in Dorothy's delight quickened his own interest in the daily life they shared. In striving to return to her some of the joy her presence gave to him, his mind was gradually distracted from its two-fold burden. To realize this, we have only to recall that evening, typical of many, when he led her in triumph to the orchard to see a glow-worm which he had placed there for her delight.

"Among all lovely things my love had been;
Had noted well the stars, all flowers that grew
About her home; but she had never seen
A glow-worm, never one, and this I knew.

While riding near her home one stormy night
A single glow-worm did I chance to espy;
I have a fervent welcome to the sight,
And from my horse I leapt; great joy had I.

6. Wordsworth "The Prelude" - Book 11 Lines 353-366.

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I have a fervent welcome to the sight,

And from my horse I leapt; great joy had I.

Upon a leaf the glow-worm did I lay,
To bear it with me through the stormy night:
And, as before, it shone without dismay;
Albeit putting forth a fainter light.

When to the dwelling of my Love I came,
I went into the orchard quietly;
And left the glow-worm, blessing it by name,
Laid safely by itself, beneath a tree.

The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;
At night the glow-worm shone beneath the tree
I led my Lucy to the spot 'Look here',
Oh! joy it was for her, and joy for me!"⁷

Whether the lovely little poems addressed to "Lucy" had their original inspiration in an early episode in his life, it is not known, but much of the feeling expressed in them is an outgrowth of his passionate devotion to Dorothy as this poem proves.

In an early poem Wordsworth puts into the mouth of a woman who is recalling the dawn of her love for her husband the words,

"And I, in truth, did love him like a brother"⁸

The line has been quoted as a typical example of Wordsworth's ignorance of the passion. Yet, to those who know the depth of

7. Wordsworth op. cit. "Among all lovely things my Love had been" p. 277.

8. Wordsworth op. cit. "Guilt and Sorrow" Stanza XXVIII Line 8.

Upon a leaf the glow-worm did I lay,
To bear it with me through the stormy night;
And, as before, it shone without dismay;
Albeit putting forth a feeble light.
When to the dwelling of my love I came,
I went into the orchard dutifully;
And left the glow-worm, blessing it by name,
Laid safely by itself, beneath a tree.
The whole next day, I hoped, and hoped with fear;
At night the glow-worm shone beneath the tree
I led my Lucy to the spot 'look here',
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feeling from which it sprang, it seems nearer to the sublime than the ridiculous. This passionate devotion of brother and sister is among the most profoundly moving things in literary history.

But not only did Dorothy preserve the poet in him, she guided the bent of his poetic mind. As a boy his nature had lacked something of tenderness and in "The Prelude" he acknowledges what she did for him.

"but for thee, sweet Friend,
My soul, too reckless of mild grace had been
Far longer by what Nature it was framed
Longer retained its countenance severe,
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favorite of the Stars
But thou did plant the crevices with flowers
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers."⁹

It was not, perhaps, her fault that the flowers she planted had, at times, a sickly growth, or that this genius familiar with the clouds could not always adapt himself to the homely smiles and tears of Mother Earth. Wordsworth did not possess his sister's innate genius for the trivial, and not a few of his

9. Ibid "The Prelude" Book XIII Lines 247-256

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Familiar, and a favorite of the Stars

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poetic failures sprang from the attempt to transmute into art the simple fugitive experiences that went to make up their daily life. Dorothy never realized this. She read his most commonplace lines in the light of their intention rather than their achievement and became a dangerously indiscriminating critic. But that was later. At Racedown the influence of each upon the other was all good. Dorothy was stimulated to develop in herself that instinct for observation which was soon to flourish in her "Journals" William was drawn from his broodings to realize more fully the delights that lay about him, to love what she loved, and to find joy in that.

The second winter at Racedown brought two welcome visitors. Basil Montague came down from London to visit his son and Mary Hutchinson spent several months with them. When Montagu left he took William with him to Bristol and left Dorothy and Mary alone together. In a letter to Jane, Dorothy writes, "--we are as happy as human beings can be; that is when William is at home, for you cannot imagine how dull we feel and what a vacuum his loss has occasioned, but this is the first day; tomorrow will be better. William is as cheerful as can be; perhaps you may not think it, but he is the life of the whole house."¹⁰

Doubtless some of William's cheerfulness was due to Mary's presence. They were old friends, there is good evidence that

10. D. W. to J. M. Mar. 19, 1797.

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they had been lovers, and it seemed as if the earlier affection he had for her was beginning to revive.

What the state of his feelings was for his Annette can only be conjectured. But it is safe to imagine that four years had made a difference in both of them. It is unlikely that she still loved him or even wished to marry him. Known to the world as a widow, she was an ardent Royalist and had thrown herself with zest and courage into a dangerous cause. While she might look to William for support of their child it is hard to believe she would have given up her interesting and exciting life to settle down in a strange country with a man whose ideals and interests were diametrically opposed to her own. While William might have been ready to fulfil his obligations to her, he must have realized that a union with Annette would be fatal to the happiness of both of them as well as to the achievement of his poetic ambitions. Dorothy must have realized this, too. As long as the war went on, nothing could be settled she knew, she could only wait in hope and, it may be, confide in Mary what her dreams for the future of the three of them might be.

Wordsworth must have met Coleridge at Bristol during his visit there and although he had met him before in London in 1795, on this second meeting he extracted a promise from Coleridge to visit him at Racedown. Though two years younger than Wordsworth, Coleridge was already known to a wide circle as a

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poet, preacher, and talker and wherever he went, his brilliant genius, united as it was with an irresistible personal charm, had won him eager followers. His old schoolfellow, Charles Lamb, worshipped him. Cottle, the Bristol bookseller, published his first volume of poems and offered him a market for any number of verses he might produce. The gifted Charles Lloyd had come to lodge at his house in order to be near him. Thomas Poole, tanner and farmer of Nether Stowey, a man who combined keen intellectual interests with much practical ability and shrewd commonsense, had fallen completely under Coleridge's spell and was ready to stand by him in any extremity. It was to be near Poole that Coleridge had brought his wife and infant Hartley to settle at Nether Stowey.

Coleridge always looked with touching confidence, for his friends to see him through whatever scheme he might undertake and their affection he returned in full measure. With an impulsive, hyper-sensitive nature that had been cramped by a lonely boyhood, his one insistent craving was for love. Up to this time, however, he had given his heart to no one who could appreciate the value of the mind that went with it. In Wordsworth he found someone whom he felt to be immeasurably his superior. Wordsworth, too, among the friends who believed in his genius had none like Coleridge whom he could meet on equal terms.

In Coleridge's company he felt an intellectual stimulus which together with Dorothy's loving care was to complete his

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in his genius had none like Coleridge whom he could meet on
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In Coleridge's company he felt an intellectual stimulus
which together with Dorothy's loving care was to complete his

regeneration. The two men were made for each other.

Coleridge's first visit to Racedown was a momentous occasion. Nearly half a century later, William and Dorothy recalled his arrival, how "he did not keep to the high road, but leapt over a gate and bounded down the pathless field by which he cut off an angle"¹¹ to meet them. It was symbolic of the way he entered their lives.

In a letter to Mary Hutchinson written soon after their first meeting Dorothy says, "You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge. He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose growing, half-curling, rough, black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full and not very dark, but grey-such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression, but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows, and an overhanging forehead."¹²

After Coleridge's arrival the first thing they did was to

11. Letters op. cit. M.W. and Sara Coleridge Nov. 7, 1845.

12. Letters op cit D. W. and M. H. June 1797.

...the two men were in the same place.
Coleridge's first visit to Hampden was a momentous occasion.
Hearty hail a century later, William and Dorothy recalled the
arrival, how "he did not seem to know the road, but I saw over
a gate and thence down the garden field to which he came off
on a path to meet him. It was very dark, the way he entered
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first meeting Dorothy says, "You had a great loss in not seeing
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of soul, mind and spirit. There is no conversation, no good-
natured and cheerful, and little William, interested in itself so
much about every little thing. At first I thought him very
plain, that is for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has
a wide mouth, a big nose, and not very good teeth, I think.
I was growing, half-curling, rough, black hair. But if you hear
him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye
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After Coleridge's arrival the first thing they did was to

read Wordsworth's new poem "The Ruined Cottage" with which Coleridge was delighted; and after tea he repeated two acts and a half of his tragedy, "Osorio". The next morning William read his tragedy, "The Borderers". Coleridge stayed at Racedown about ten days, but he would not consider a long separation from his new friends and before the end of the month was back again. He tore himself away a second time to reappear with a chaise in which to transport them to Nether Stowey where they spent a very happy fortnight. For a week of their stay, Charles Lamb was a fellow guest. He was not the cheery Lamb of later days, for he was still under the shadow of that tragedy which was the dark prelude to his life of dual loneliness. But it was then that the seeds were sown of the friendship which was to be among the precious things of Dorothy's later life.

In a letter to Cottle from Racedown, Coleridge had made no reference to Dorothy so absorbed was he in the genius of his new friend. "Wordsworth", he had written "admires my tragedy which gives me great hopes. Wordsworth has written a Tragedy himself. I speak with heart felt sincerity, and (I think) unblinded judgment, when I tell you 'I feel a little man by his side' and yet I do not think myself a less man than I formerly thought myself".¹³

But when he had them both under his roof at Nether Stowey

13. S.T.C. to J.C. July 1797.

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But when he had them both under his roof at Nether Stowey

he spoke of Dorothy as enthusiastically as her brother and with a subtler discrimination. "W. and his exquisite sister are with me. She is a woman indeed! in mind I mean, and heart, for her person is such, that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary; but if you expected to see any ordinary woman, you would think her pretty! but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion, her most innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw would say,

'Guilt was a thing impossible in her.' Her information various. Her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature; and her taste, a perfect electrometer. It bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties, and most recondite faults."¹⁴

For a week or so, however, Coleridge was denied the full enjoyment of the companionship of his friends. The second day after the Wordsworths came, Sara accidentally spilt a skillet of boiling milk over his foot and for a week or so he was confined to the house.¹⁵ Sitting in the arbor one evening he followed them in fancy and put his fancy into verse:

"Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Hath dimmed mine eyes to blindness!"

14. S.T.C. - J.C. July 1797.

15. DeSelincourt, op. cit. pp. 69-76.

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14. S.T.C. - J.C. July 1897.
15. DeSalmon, op. cit. pp. 69-70.

They meanwhile, friends whom I never more may see again,
In springy heath, along the hill-top edge
Wander in gladness -- "16

As he watched his guests set out upon one of their wanderings about the wooded hills, Wordsworth's tall, gaunt figure contrasting almost grotesquely with the gypsy smallness of Charles Lamb and of her whom he already called "my sister" his heart was full of peace and joy for the gift of friendship which life had brought to his door.¹⁷ His guests were delighted with all they saw. Dorothy writes, "There is everything here; sea, woods wild as fancy ever painted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, villages so romantic, and William and I in a wander by ourselves, found out a sequestered waterfall in a dell framed by steep hills covered with full-grown timber trees. The woods are as fine as those at Lowther, and the country more romantic, and it has the character of the less grand parts of the neighborhood of the Lakes"¹⁸

On this same "wander" they lighted upon Alfoxden, a large country house surrounded by a deer park. The place gave them such delight that at once, as was their want, they pictured themselves as dwellers in a little cottage near by, if such could be found there. A few days later they heard that the house itself

16. Coleridge's Poetical Works "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

17. Gausset - The Lost Leader p. 200

18. Letters op. cit. D.W. to M. H. (?) July 4, 1797

They meanwhile, friends whom I never more may see again,
In spry beat, along the hill-top edge
Wander in gladness --

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18. Coleridge's Poetical Works "Tales of the Bower" by Wilson
IV. Ganeset - The Last Letter p. 200
18. Letters of Col. D.W. to W.H. (2) July 4, 1797

was to let furnished, at a merely nominal rent, and through the good offices of Thomas Poole they secured it at twenty-three pounds a year.¹⁹

19. DeSelincourt op. cit. p. 76

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CHAPTER V ALFOXDEN

On July 14, 1797, the Wordsworths moved to their new home at Alfoxden and in the exquisite days that followed Dorothy, William, and Coleridge enjoyed life to the utmost. William was happier than he had ever been. As he talked to Coleridge, he saw how wrong he had been in distrusting his own experience because it could not be interpreted by another man's philosophy. He realized it was his task to evolve a philosophy from his own experience. The feeling with which Nature filled him became a revelation which it was his life work to communicate to his fellowmen. He learned to regard his own spiritual life with detachment and had found a way of looking at life which gave unity to all he thought and wrote.

Coleridge, even as he illuminated William's experience and taught him to have the courage of vision given to him, was himself learning something from the purity and intensity of those relations to Nature. William's feeling for Nature interested him and, to some extent communicated itself to him, but Dorothy's feeling for Nature, which seemed to him quite different interested him still more. There was enchantment for him in his walks with Dorothy. It seemed as she walked beside him, swift and half stooping, that her eyes saw through the superficial appearance of things, making nothing of the conventional distinction between beauty and ugliness. The leafless boughs, the bare trees, he noted were to her no less dear than the

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fair trees in full leaf. She would stop to note the exact and lively rough green of the turnips with as much interest as she would note the rich bloom of the heath flowers. In the sheer form and texture of things she would find something that fed her heart and fired her imagination.

Dorothy could not explain what she felt in those days when she gave herself as never before to feeling. She only knew that she was not thinking about life but living. She was no longer a lonely watcher of the stream of life, she was absorbed in its waters. She was happy in this absorption, happy for the time to lose identity in the sheer joy of being alive.

The happiness of these three was felt by all who came in contact with them. Cottle, who visited Nether Stowey in July, realized that he was in touch with lives brimful of beauty. Ordinary things were transfigured and the beautiful things of the country seemed to have an added beauty. Sunbeams dappled the tables in the garden, the birds sang as if it were spring, the breezes were heavy with fragrance, butterflies gilded the sunshine. The happiness that warmed the air in the presence of these three sank into the heart, pressing upon it and overbrimming it with sweetness.

Coleridge was immensely benefited in spirits by the companionship of the Wordsworths. Although he was depressed because as he put it, he had "no power of earning Bread and Cheese", he had a marvelous faculty of forgetting care and his finest poems were conceived and partly executed while the

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finest poems were conceived and partly executed while the

Wordsworths were at Alfoxden. The bracing effect of this society is seen, too, in the consecutive toil which Coleridge put upon his "Osorio" which probably represents more hard work than anything else he ever wrote. Sheridan had asked Coleridge to write a tragedy and the knowledge that Wordsworth was writing one had encouraged him. Such progress was made that, by September, he had reached the middle of the fifth act, and a month later it was finished and sent to Drury Lane Theater. It was rejected but, in 1813, in a revised form with a new title, "Remorse", it was successfully performed and had a long run.¹

Wordsworth was not much later than Coleridge in finishing his tragedy and on November 20, Dorothy Wordsworth writes, "William's play is finished and sent to the managers of the Covent Garden Theater. We have not the faintest expectation that it will be accepted."² But, undoubtedly, they had some hopes, for they went to London about the end of the month and stayed three weeks. The play was rejected in the end, but attributing, as they did, the rejection of "The Borderers" to the "debased state of the stage", they did not allow their disappointment to weigh too heavily upon them.

The visit to London, after so many months of quiet life, acted as a stimulus to Wordsworth's productive powers. He returned to Alfoxden with a quickened appreciation of nature,

1. Harper, Wm. Wordsworth pp. 330-332

2. D.W. to M.H. Nov. 20, 1797.

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The visit to London, after so many months of quiet life, acted as a stimulus to Wordsworth's productive powers. He returned to Alfoxden with a quickened appreciation of nature,

and, also, of his friend Coleridge with his genius and charm. Whenever the two men are together, it is Coleridge who catches the eye and enthralls the ear, but he comes and goes. His intellectual fire darts now here, now there his genius varies like the color of a star. Wordsworth gives a steady light. While the companionship of Coleridge and the Wordsworths produced a great quickening of their poetic powers, it was more immediately evident in Coleridge. During these months he composed his most important poems. --

"This Lime-tree Bower My Prison"

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

"Christabel" Part I

"France, an Ode"

"Frost at Midnight"

"Fears in Solitude"

"The Nightingale; a Conversation Poem"

"Kubla Khan"

The story of how he wrote "The Ancient Mariner" illustrates the fact that, though they could together plan a work, it would in the end take form and spirit from an individual mind. On November 13, 1797, Coleridge, with Wordsworth and his sister started from Alfoxden about four o'clock in the afternoon, intending to walk to Lynton and the Valley of Stones, on the North Devon coast about thirty-five miles distant. With their small supply of money, it seemed a rash expenditure, but they light-heartedly put care aside by resolving to pay the expenses

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of the trip from the proceeds of a poem to be written for "The Monthly Magazine". Thus relieved in mind, they tramped gaily over the Quantock Hills through the dark autumn evening, and spent the first night at the village of Watchet on the Bristol Channel, planning the "Ancient Mariner" as they went. Coleridge invented most of the story, which he said was suggested to him by a dream of his friend, Mr. Cruikshank, a resident of the Stowey neighborhood. Wordsworth contributed the idea of poetic justice for the crime of killing an albatross. He had just been reading Shelvocke "Voyages" where he had seen a description of the bird. He also suggested the gruesome incident of the navigation of the ship by the dead men. But the undertaking proved more congenial to Coleridge and the poem is his. The trio completed their excursion which took several days and furnished many delightful and droll recollections. Coleridge worked at the poem until it was finished in March, on the twenty-third of which month, Dorothy wrote in her "Journal" -- "Coleridge dined with us. He brought his ballad finished"³ Coleridge, in discussing "The Ancient Mariner" and feeling that there was something of the life of all three of them in the poem said they were "three persons with one soul".⁴

"Three persons with one soul" was indeed the truth. Impressions sank more deeply into this one soul than they had

3. Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth p. 14

4. Harper - Wm. Wordsworth pp. 330-334.

of the trip from the proceeds of a poem to be written for "The Monthly Magazine". Thus relieved in mind, they traversed easily over the Quantock Hills through the dark autumn evening, and spent the first night at the village of Watchet on the Bristol Channel, planning the "Ancient Mariner" as they went. Coleridge invented most of the story, which he said was suggested to him by a dream of his friend, Mr. Crinkham, a resident of the Stowey neighborhood. Wordsworth contributed the idea of poetic justice for the crime of killing an albatross. He had just been reading Shalooke "Voyages" where he had seen a description of the bird. He also suggested the gruesome incident of the navigation of the ship by the dead men. But the undertaking proved more congenial to Coleridge and the poem is his. The trio completed their excursion which took several days and furnished many delightful and droll recollections. Coleridge worked at the poem until it was finished in March, on the twenty-third of which month, Dorothy wrote in her "Journal" -- "Coleridge dined with us. He brought his belated finished 'Ancient Mariner', Coleridge, in discussing 'The Ancient Mariner' and feeling that there was something of the life of all three of them in the poem said they were 'three persons with one soul'."

"Three persons with one soul" was indeed the truth. In expressions such more deeply into this one soul than they had

hitherto done into each of the three souls that met in it. It was gradually becoming part of the life of the three to capture these impressions, delicate, brilliant, and fleeting, before the glow had faded and the brightness dulled. William was in a tumult of feeling from day to day as he strove for expression. The sweetness of the first mild spring day, the singing of the redbreast in the larch that was just putting forth its green, the sleepy stirring of the birds in the twilight before dawn, the happy birds fluttering in the grove in the sunshine would set him muttering fragments of verse that tormented him until he had given them form. As he watched the fawns in the grove of Alfoxden, he suddenly found words for the feeling of lament with which the fate of the little girl lost at Sterne Mill Bridge had affected him.

"You yet may spy the Fawn at play

The Hare upon the Green,

But the sweet face of Lucy Gray

Will never more be seen."⁵

Tom Poole repeated to him some words uttered by an idiot boy;

"The Cocks did crow to whoo, to-who

And the sun did shine so cold--"⁶

and the perfect topsy-turvydom of the words was the inspiration for "The Idiot Boy" and he used the words in the last stanza.

5. Wordsworth op. cit. "Lucy Gray" Stanza 3 p 118

6. Ibid op. cit. "The Idiot Boy" pp. 86-91.

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5. Wordsworth op. cit. "Lucy Grey" Stanzas 3 & 118
6. Ibid op. cit. "The Idiot Boy" pp. 88-91.

It seemed as if all he had met had some clue to the infinite which set his imagination to work.

Coleridge showed the same sensitiveness. Although at this time he was sadly beset by financial worries, and also the alienation of Lamb due to Lloyd's malicious gossip, the loving sympathy of William and Dorothy never failed him. He was still on affectionate terms with his wife, but the fuller companionship of his new friends made him conscious of a difference. When Sara intervenes in his poetry, it is to recall him from daring imaginative speculation to the safer ground of a sincere but conventional piety. Dorothy was a stimulus rather than a curb while "her eye watchful in minutest observation of nature" both guided his own and gave it clearer vision. He was curiously sensitive to the rhythm of Dorothy's voice and to the words she used. Hitherto, he had tended to be ornate in his diction. As he listened to her phrases, he felt like discarding many of his own words as if they were clumsy and outworn. Her ability to phrase in simple words all that she saw and heard was an inspiration to him.

At this time, too, both Coleridge and Wordsworth were at work on their joint publication to be called "Lyrical Ballads". The idea for this book had its beginning on the walking trip in which "The Ancient Mariner" was planned. Their conversation turned as it had often turned before to two cardinal points of poetry, reality and imagination. The thought then suggested it-

It seemed as if all he had not done due to the initiative which set his imagination to work.

Coleridge showed the same sensitiveness. Although at this time he was sadly beset by financial worries, and also the allocation of Lamb due to Lloyd's malicious gossip, the loving sympathy of William and Dorothy never failed him. He was still on affectionate terms with his wife, but the inferior companionship of his new friends made him conscious of a difference. When Sara intervened in his poetry, it is to recall him from daring imaginative speculation to the safer ground of a sincere but conventional piety. Dorothy was a stimulus rather than a curb while "her eye watched in minutest observation of nature" both guided his own and gave it clearer vision. He was curiously sensitive to the rhythm of Dorothy's voice and to the words she used. Hitherto, he had tended to be ornate in his diction. As he listened to her phrases, he felt like those carrying many of his own words as if they were clumsy and outworn. Her ability to phrase in simple words all that she saw and heard was an inspiration to him.

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self, that on this basis a series of poems could be composed of two sorts. In the one the incidents and agents were to be in part supernatural; in the other, the characters and incidents were to be chosen from ordinary village life. Coleridge was to direct himself to the romantic element, and to give to supernatural incidents the reality of human interest. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself a series of realistic themes, and to give a charm analogous to that of the supernatural to things of everyday life. Coleridge wrote for his share "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "The Dark Ladie" and the first part of "Christabel", but Wordsworth wrote a much larger group of poems in following out this scheme.⁷

In January, 1798, Dorothy's "Journal" began and the entries from January 20 to March 22 have been preserved. Here for the first time she reveals that delicate sense of observation, that exquisitely sensitive susceptibility of eye and ear which proclaim the true artist. Her earlier letters describe with a ready pen her delight in the country and country life but show few traces of her peculiar genius. But these two years of close companionship with her brother had quickened and brought it to birth. Much of what the journal records are experiences which she shared with William or Coleridge or when the three of them were together. Some of the language which she records may well have fallen from their lips. But though we owe our

7. Caine S.T.Coleridge pp. 63-64.

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our vocabulary and something of our experience to the company we keep, the use we make of it depends upon ourselves and all that Dorothy notes in her "Journal" has a freshness and spontaneity that is hers alone. The entries are often mere jottings disjointed sentences without verbs. Yet no studied composition could convey with a surer touch the landscape lure of rural England. When she is with nature unspoiled and unadorned she sets down simply and faithfully what she sees, and drinking in the spirit of the season, distills it into telling phrase.⁸

Although she began her diary at the time of year when the English country side has least attraction to common eyes, yet how she warms under the winter sunshine that has come to break up a spell of dark rainy weather.

"Alfoxden, January 20th, 1798. -- The green paths down the hillsides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peoples itself in the sumbeams. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers. The purple-starred hepatica spreads itself in the sun, and the clustering snowdrops put forth their white heads, at first upright, ribbed with green and like a rosebud when completely opened, hanging their heads downwards, but slowly lengthening their slender stems. The slanting woods

8. DeSelincourt Dorothy Wordsworth pp 78-79.

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Although she began her diary at the time of year when the English country side has least attraction to common eyes, yet now she writes under the winter sunshines that has come to break up a spell of dark rainy weather.

"Alloxden, January 20th, 1798. -- The green paths down the hillsides are channels for streams. The young wheat is streaked by silver lines of water running between the ridges. After the wet dark days, the country seems more populous. It peopled itself in the swarms. The garden, mimic of spring, is gay with flowers. The purple-streaked hepaticas spreads itself in the sun, and the clustering snowdrops put forth their white heads, at first upright, ribbed with green and like a rosebud when completely opened, hanging their heads downwards, but slowly lengthening their slender stems. The slanting woods

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of an unvarying brown, showing the light through the thin network of their upper boughs. Upon the highest ridges of that round hill covered with planted oaks, the shafts of the trees show in the light like the columns of a ruin.

Jan. 23rd. -- Bright sunshine, went out at 3 o'clock. The sea perfectly calm blue, streaked with deeper colour by the clouds, and tongues or points of sand; on our return of a gloomy red. The sun gone down. The crescent moon, Jupiter and Venus. The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attribute this partly to the bareness of the trees, but chiefly to the absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that noiseless noise which lives in the summer air. The villages marked out by beautiful beds of smoke. The turf fading into the the mountain road. The scarlet flowers of the moss.

Jan. 25th. -- Went to Poole's after tea. Thy sky spread with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon, which though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so strong a light as to chequer the earth with shadows. At once the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the center of a black-blue vault. She sailed along, followed by multitudes of stars, small, bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed concentrated, (half-moon).

Jan. 27th. -- Walked from seven o'clock, till half-past eight. Upon the whole an uninteresting evening. Only once while we were in the wood the moon burst through the invisible

of an unvarying brown, showing the light through the thinest
work of their upper branches. Upon the highest ridges of that
round hill covered with planted oaks, the shafts of the trees
show in the light like the columns of a ruin.

Jan. 23rd. -- Bright sunshine, went out at 8 o'clock. The

sea perfectly calm blue, streaked with deeper colour by the

clouds, and tongues or points of sand; on our return of a

gloomy red. The sun gone down. The crescent moon, Jupiter

and Venus. The sound of the sea distinctly heard on the tops

of the hills, which we could never hear in summer. We attributed

this partly to the barrenness of the trees, but chiefly to the

absence of the singing of birds, the hum of insects, that

noiseless noise which lives in the summer air. The villages

marked out by beautiful beds of smoke. The turf leading into

the the mountain road. The scarlet flowers of the moss.

Jan. 24th. -- Went to Pool's after tea. The sky spread

with one continuous cloud, whitened by the light of the moon,

which though her dim shape was seen, did not throw forth so

strong a light as to chequer the earth with shadows. At once

the clouds seemed to cleave asunder, and left her in the center

of a black-blue vault. She sailed alone, followed by multitudes

of stars, small, bright, and sharp. Their brightness seemed

concentrated, (half-moon).

Jan. 25th. -- Walked from seven o'clock, till half-past

eight. Upon the whole an uninteresting evening. Only once

while we were in the wood the moon burst through the invisible

veil which enveloped her, the shadows of the oaks blackened, and their lines became more strongly marked. The withered leaves were coloured with a deeper yellow, a brighter gloss spotted the hollies; again her form became dimmer; the sky flat, unmarked by distances, a white thin cloud. The manufacturer's dog makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream.

February 1st. -- About two hours before dinner, set forward towards Mr. Bartholomew's. The wind blew so keen in our faces that we felt ourselves inclined to seek the covert of the wood. There we had a warm shelter, gathered a burthen of large rotten boughs blown down by the wind of the preceding night. The sun shone clear, but all at once a heavy blackness hung over the sea. The trees almost roared, and the ground seemed in motion with the multitudes of dancing leaves, which made a rustling sound distinct from that of the trees. Still the asses pastured in quietness under the hollies, undisturbed by these forerunners of storm. The wind beat furiously against us as we returned. Full moon. She rose in uncommon majesty over the sea, slowly ascending through the clouds. Sat with the window open an hour in the moonlight.

Feb. 4th. -- Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge. The morning warm and sunny. The young lasses seen on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer

veil which enveloped her, the shadows of the oak blackened,

and their lines became more strongly marked. The withered

leaves were colored with a deeper yellow, a brighter glass

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many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the

brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream.

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towards Mr. Bartholomew's. The wind blew so keen in our faces

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over the sea, slowly ascending through the clouds. Sat with

the window open an hour in the moonlight.

Feb. 4th. -- Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with

Coleridge. The morning warm and sunny. The young leaves seen

on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer

holiday clothes -- pink petticoats and blue. Mothers with their children in arms, and little ones that could just walk, tottering by their side. Midges or small flies spinning in the sunshine, the songs of the lark and the redbreast; daisies upon the turf; the hazels in blossom; honeysuckles budding. I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge. The furze gay with blossom. The moss rubbed from the pailings by the sheep, that leave locks of wool, and the red marks with which they are spatted, upon the wood.

March 1st. -- We rose early. A thick fog obscured the distant prospect entirely, but the shapes of the nearer trees and the dome of the wood dimly seen and dilated. It cleared away between ten and eleven. The shapes of the mist slowly moving along, exquisitely beautiful; passing over the sheep they almost seemed to have more of life than those quiet creatures. The unseen birds singing in the mist."⁹

The value of Dorothy's "Journal" is enhanced by its relation to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poetry. Dorothy probably started the "Journal" at William's request and, as we have said before, some of the observations which it records may well have been made by William or Coleridge. Certainly the recurrence of certain phrases from the "Journal" in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's writings would suggest that when the two men discussed and read their poetry together Dorothy contributed her

9. Journals op. cit. p. 3,4,5,6,7,12.

share by readings from the "Journal".

A striking example of this relationship is to be found in Wordsworth's poem "A Night-Piece" when compared with the entries in Dorothy's "Journal" for January 25 and 31. The poem is as follows:

"A Night-Piece"¹⁰

The sky is overcast
With a continuous cloud of texture close,
Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
Which through that vale is indistinctly seen
A dull contracted circle yielding light
So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
Chequering the ground -- from rock, plants tree or tower
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up -- the clouds are split
Asunder, and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens,
There in a blue-black vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars that small
And sharp, and bright along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives; how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not! the wind is in the tree

10. Wordsworth's op. cit. "A Night-Piece" p. 71

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A striking example of this relationship is to be found in Wordsworth's poem "A Night-Piece" when compared with the entries in Dorothy's "Journal" for January 22 and 23. The poem is as follows:

"A Night-Piece"

The sky is overcast
With a continuous cloud of texture close,
Heavy and wan, all whitened by the moon,
Which through that veil is indistinctly seen
A dull contrasted circle yielding light
So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
Chequering the ground -- from rock, plants tree or tower
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up -- the clouds are split
Aunder, and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens,
There in a blue-black vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars that smile
And sharp, and bright along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives; how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not! the wind is in the trees

But they are silent; -- still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene."

The asses she notes "pasturing in quietness" on
February 1st bore their part in the inspiration of "Peter Bell"¹¹

In "A Whirlblast from behind the Hill"¹² the leaves dance
as they danced in Dorothy's "Journal" of February 1st.

Her "Journal" mentions the strange, uncouth howl of the
manufacturer's dog and Coleridge writes in "Christabel"¹²

"Sir Leoline, the Baron rich
Hath a Toothless mastiff, which
From her kennel beneath the rock
Maketh answer to the clock."

On March 7th she drank tea with her brother at Coleridge's
"A cloudy sky", she wrote, "Observed nothing particularly
interesting -- the distant prospect obscured, One only leaf
upon the top of a tree -- the sole remaining leaf - danced
round like a ray blown by the wind". March 24th was a dull

11. Wordsworth op. cit. "Peter Bell" p. 96

" " " A Whirlblast from behind the Hill pp.
12. Coleridge op. cit. "Christabel" p. 116. 82-83.

But they are silent; -- still they roll along
Immensely distant; and the vast
Earth round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still seems its unattainable depth.
At length the vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene."

The verses she notes "passing in quietness" on

February last bore their part in the inscription of "Peter Bell"

In "A Whirlwind from behind the Hill" the leaves dance

as they danced in Dorothy's "Journal" of February last.

Her "Journal" mentions the strange, wonderful howl of the

manufacturer's dog and Coleridge writes in "Christabel" is

"Sir Leoline, the Baron rich

Hath a toothless mastiff, which

From her kennel beneath the rock

Maketh answer to the clock."

On March 7th she drank tea with her brother at Coleridge's

"A cloudy sky", she wrote, "observed nothing particularly

interesting -- the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf

upon the top of a tree -- the sole remaining leaf - danced

round like a ray blown by the wind". March 8th was a dull

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11. Wordsworth op. cit. "Peter Bell" p. 98.
 12. Coleridge op. cit. "Christabel" p. 116.
 13. Coleridge op. cit. "Christabel" p. 116.

night--"a sort of white shade over the blue sky. The stars dim. The spring continues to advance very slowly, no green trees., the hedges leafless; nothing green but the brambles that still retain their own leaves --- The crooked arm of the old oak tree points upward to the moon". And on the next evening spent again at Stowey, she noted -- "The night cloudy but not dark." And Coleridge continued his poem

"Is the night chilly and dark;

The night is chilly but not dark

The thin gray cloud is spread on high

It covers but not hides the sky.

The moon is behind, and at the full

And yet she looks both small and dull.

The night is chill, the cloud is gray;

'Tis a month before the month of May

And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

She stole along, she nothing spoke

The sighs she heaved were soft and low

And naught was green upon the oak

But moss and rarest mistletoe

She kneels beneath the huge oak tree

And in silence prayeth she.

The night is chill; the forest bare

Is it the wind that moaneth bleak

night--"a sort of white shade over the blue sky. The stars dim.
The spring continues to advance very slowly, no green trees,
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again at Stowey, she noted -- "The night cloudy but not dark."
And Coleridge continued his poem

"Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark
The thin gray cloud is spread on high
It covers but not hides the sky
The moon is behind, and at the full
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray;
'Tis a month before the month of May
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.
She stole alone, she nothing spoke
The sighs she heaved were soft and low
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe
She knelt beneath the huge oak tree
And in silence prayeth she.
The night is chill; the forest bare
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak

There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek --
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.¹³

Thus "Christabel" was born between them. Coleridge's was the fantasy, the power of enchanting transmutation; Dorothy's was the vivid sense of the sights and sounds of nature that supplemented his vaguer vision. As to any definite plot, the poem never had one until, in later years, Coleridge invented one to excuse his inability to continue it.

This poem was the projection of a romantic mood as well as the fruit of a tender association. Without this association, it could scarcely have come into being, for Coleridge's magical powers were already being sapped by circumstance, and, save for a time, when they were artificially restored by a narcotic. "Christabel" was the last poem in which they were fully realized. In two other poems of this year "Love" and "The Ballad of the Dark Ladie" there are echoes of the same note, but their general level is more conventionally romantic. Both surely are haunted

13. Ibid. "Christabel" Stanzas 3,5,7. p. 116.

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by Dorothy's presence although it would be misleading to say they were actually addressed to her. Coleridge addressed her as he had addressed Mary Evans as "Sister". It was for him the perfect relationship, and he implied by it something more than brotherly affection. At once feminine and child-like himself, he responded to any woman's sympathy with a tenderness devoid of passion. For a woman of such subtle sensibility as Dorothy Wordsworth his devotion only differed in degree. At moments it was translated into poetry of an enchanted communion and doubtless, it was an image of her which floated through the poem "Love" and underlay the "Dark Ladie". She lives a consoling phantom in the stanzas of the poem "Love".¹⁴

"The moonshine stealing o'er the scene
Had blended with the lights of eve,
And she was there, my hope, my joy,
My own dear Genevieve.

Few sorrows hath she of her own
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
She loves me best, whene'er I sing
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air
I sang an old and moving story
An old rude song that suited well

14. Ibid "Love" p. 135 Stanzas 3,5,6.

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¹⁴. Ibid "Love" p. 155 Stanzas 3, 5, 6.

That ruin wild and hoary".

Or in

"Wait only till the hand of eve

Hath wholly closed yon western bars

And through the dark we two will steal

Beneath the twinkling stars"¹⁵

In such verses intermingled with the relaxed sentiment typical of Coleridge whenever he sets himself to write a love poem, the meetings of which "Christabel" was born are unconsciously remembered and in another stanza, doubtless unconsciously, more light is shed on his relationship with Dorothy than by any amount of inference from later events.

"My friends with rude ungente words

They scoff and bid me fly to thee

O give me shelter in thy breast

O shield and shelter me."¹⁶

The poet and the dreamer, as modern psychology has demonstrated, are closely akin. The incidents which come to both are dramatizations of the subconscious so they say. With Coleridge the comparison is particularly relevant since he was a somnambulist even in his waking hours. The last stanza quoted may be regarded merely as a part of a romantic ballad but it does embody in picturesque language the need which Dorothy

15. Ibid Ballad of the Dark Ladie p. 136-137 - Stanza 11

16. Ibid P.137 - Stanza 7.

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15. Ibid Ballad of the Park Ladies p. 136-137 - Stanzas 11

16. Ibid p. 137 - Stanzas 7.

supplies in his life.

If "Christabel" was almost the last of his pure incantations "Frost at Midnight" was, except for a passage in "The Nightingale" written two months later, the last of his domestic idylls. Indeed his period of happiness was ending fast. Fact was beginning to threaten fantasy, and fear, public and private, to trouble peace. In April there was even alarm of a possible French invasion and it was no longer possible in a "half sleep" to dream of better worlds. Wordsworth attitude toward life and his own maturing mind had deprived him of that solace.

When Coleridge was alone fears might crowd his mind, but he forgot them when with Dorothy in the wood, in which day by day through this sunny April they walked together, he listened to the nightingale.¹⁷

"That crowds and hurries and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes
But never elsewhere in one place I knew
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove
They answer and provoke each other's songs
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug, jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all

17. Fausset S.T.Coleridge pp. 172-180

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-- she knows all these notes,
That gentle Maid! and oft, a moment's space
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,
Hath heard a pause of silence, till the moon
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky
With one sensation, and those wakeful birds
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy
As if some sudden gale had swept at once.
A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched
Mahy a nightingale perch giddily
On blossoming twig still swinging from the breeze
And to that motion tune his wanton song
Like tipsy joy that reels with tossing head.¹⁸

It was the last occasion in his poetry in which he seemed to have the blessing of Nature. He was to worship her in the future, but always as a rejected suitor, longing for the embrace which once he had known, and it is fitting that the nightingale, of all Nature's voices the most luxuriantly buoyant, should have inspired his ecstatic farewell.

It was a simple life which these three happy people lived that year in Alfoxden. Their walks were for the most part bounded within a radius of three or four miles, over the Quantocks to Nether Stowey and back, or to "Kilve by the sea".

18. Coleridge op. cit. "The Nightingale" pp. 131-135.
lines 44-46, 55-68, 75-86.

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18. Coleridge op. cit. "The Nightingale" pp. 151-152.
lines 44-45, 55-56, 75-76.

Often their errands were to the baker's or blacksmith's, or to the farm for eggs, or merely to pick up sticks for firewood. Yet they always returned the richer by some memorable sight or sound. For neighbors they had the Pooles, the Chesters and the Cruikshanks. William and Dorothy had formed the habit of walking in the afternoon or evening, but this was often broken by Coleridge's incursion in the early morning and at whatever hour he left them, they would tramp all or part of the way with him to Stowey. Often he would stay the night. Twice at least he bore off William and Dorothy for a tour of several days -- the one already mentioned to Watchet in November, 1797, and the other in the following May to the caves of of Cheddar. For the rest they were content with their own neighborhood "loitering long and pleasantly" in the coombes, or besides the beloved waterfall, or striding over the Quantocks discussing the principles of poetry and reciting to each other their latest verses while Dorothy followed at their heels.

There are a few pleasing pictures of this period of their lives, the profitable intercourse, the delightful rambles.¹⁹

"Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roamed

Unchecked, or loitered 'mid his sylvan combs

Thou, in bewitching words, with happy heart,

19. Lec. op. cit. p. 43

Often their errands were to the baker's or blacksmith's, or to the farm for eggs, or merely to pick up sticks for firewood. Yet they always returned the richer by some memorable sight or sound. For neighbors they had the foolies, the Chester and the Grimshams. William and Dorothy had formed the habit of walking in the afternoon or evening, but this was often broken by Coleridge's intrusion in the early morning and at whatever hour he left them, they would tramp all or part of the way with him to Stowey. Often he would stay the night. Twice at least he bore off William and Dorothy for a tour of several days -- the one already mentioned to Watchet in November, 1797, and the other in the following May to the caves of Gredgar. For the most they were content with their own neighborhood "loitering long and pleasantly" in the woods, or besides the beloved waterfall, or standing over the Quantocks discussing the principles of poetry and reciting to each other their latest verses while Dorothy followed at their heels.

There are a few pleasing pictures of this period of their lives, the prolific intercourse, the delightful rambles. "Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roamed Unchecked, or loitered 'mid his sylvan combs Then, in bewitching words, with happy heart,

Didst chant the vision of that ancient man
The bright-eyed mariner; and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel --
And I, associate with such labors, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable thorn."²⁰

The poem, "To My Sister", written in front of Alfoxden is suggestive, too, of their happy rural life. It begins on "the first mild day of March" when to the receptive spirit of the poet each minute of the advancing, balmy day appeared to be lovelier than the preceding one, while sauntering on the lawn, he begs his sister to hasten with her morning household duties and share his enjoyment of the genial sunshine.

"Then come, my Sister, come, I pray
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness."²¹

Coleridge was not satisfied that William and he should buy themselves with expressing the chance feelings that came

20. Wordsworth's op. cit. Worke "The Prelude" Book XIV
Lines 396 to 407

21. Ibid "To My Sister" p. 82.

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30. Wordsworth's op. cit. Works "The Prelude" Book XIV
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31. Ibid "To My Sister" l. 32.

to them from day to day. He wished them both to coordinate and write their experiences in long philosophical poems on Man, Nature, Society, in which he meant to express his philosophy. He made many notes for this poem in moments of illumination as he wandered on the Quantocks from time to time. His poem was to be called "The Brook" and the main idea in it was to be the merging of the finite in the infinite, even as small streams are absorbed in the mighty sea. William elected a theme much like Coleridge's. He was to write on Man, Nature and Human Life and his poem was to be called "The Recluse."

Wordsworth also had in mind another poem in which he should express at greater length than he had yet done, what he felt about the riddle of human life and the exultations, thwartings, and agonies.

But this blissful life at Alfoxden was not long to continue. The neighboring gentry viewed them askance. Their hospitality to the notorious Thelwall, the Jacobin, at the very beginning of their tenancy at Alfoxden had made an unfortunate opening to their tenancy. Lady St. Aubyn, head of the family from whom they rented the property, addressed a sharp letter to Poole for having introduced them and though Poole stoutly defended them, their bohemian manner of life only confirmed the suspicion that they were undesirable. Early in March they learnt that Alfoxden was let over their heads and at midsummer their lease would end. Faced with the problem of finding a new house, they

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had many plans. Poole held out hopes for securing them a pleasant home within a quarter of a mile of a mile of Alfoxden, which did not materialize. A week later they decided to go to Germany.

Thoughts of their coming departure, however, did not spoil their happiness of the moment. For the first time they witnessed together the rapid onrush of a later spring in a richly fertile country. In two or three days the hedges budded and blossomed, multitudes of primroses, dog violets, periwinkles, and stitchwort bordered the lanes, five days later cowslips were plentiful in the fields. Their hearts repounded to the gaiety of the season and preparations for the projected volume of poems went on apace.

In May Cottle was with them to discuss the publication of the book. Early in June, Hazlitt visited them and we are indebted to him for his picture of Wordsworth.²² There was something of a roll, a lounge in his gait not unlike his own Peter Bell. There was a severe worn pressure of thought about him temples (as if he saw something in objects more than outward appearance) an intense high narrow forehead, a Roman nose, cheeks furrowed by strong purpose and feeling and a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth, a good deal at variance with the solemn stately expression of the rest of his face.²³

22. Burra - Wordsworth pp. 76-77

23. Hazlitt - Sketches & Essays p. 271.

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22. Burns - Wordsworth pp. 76-77
23. Hazlitt - Sketches & Essays p. 271.

Then on the twenty-fifth, they said farewell to Alfoxden. After a week spent at Nether Stowey, they went to Bristol to stay with Cottle. From his house Dorothy wrote a letter to "Aunt" Rawson telling her of their sorrow at leaving Alfoxden and their plans for the proposed trip to Germany.

Their business in Bristol was to see the "Lyrical Ballads" through the press, but before a week was out, the noise and bustle of the city proved hateful to both of them and William was eager to show his sister the lovely country about them. "We crossed the Severn ferry," he tells us, "and walked ten miles further to Tintern Abbey, a very beautiful ruin on the Wye. The next day we walked along the river through Monmouth to Goodrich Castle, there slept and returned the next day to Tintern, where we slept, and thence back in a small vessel to Bristol.

No holiday that brother and sister ever took together left a deeper mark upon their own memories or upon English poetry. The lines composed on the last day of the tour, and finished as they re-entered Bristol were, at once, William's greatest contribution to the coming volume and the fullest tribute to what Dorothy had been to him since she had joined him at Race-down three years before.

"For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read

Then on the twenty-first, they said farewell to friends
for a week went to Japan House, they went to Bristol to
stay with Corrie. From his house they went to Bristol to
"Lodge" having called on all their friends in Bristol and
and their plans for the proposed trip to Germany.

Their business in Bristol was to see the "British Library"
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No matter that brother and sister ever look together left
a deeper mark upon their own memories of their English journey.
The time passed on the last day of the tour, and finished
as they returned Bristol water, at last, William's presence
contributed to a moving volume and the first of friends to
what Dorothy had been to him since she had left him at home
from three years before.

"For then and with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; then my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read

My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wildeyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once
My dear, dear Sister, and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege
Through all the years of this our life to lead
From joy to joy, for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongue
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercouse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee: and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,

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Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eye these gleams
Of past existence -- wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love -- oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs
And this green pastoral landscape were to me.
Both dear, both for themselves and for thy sake.²⁴

Soon after their return to Bristol, they moved to the village of Shirchampton five miles off where they could live in quiet and yet be within reach of Cottle's printing office. Here Coleridge often joined them and some time in August suggested to them what he called "a dash into Wales. "Our going to Wales" wrote William to a friend," was a quite unpremeditated scheme. Mr. Coleridge proposed it one evening and we left the next

24. Wordsworth op. cit. Tintern Abbey pp. 91-93.

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Mr. Coleridge proposed it one evening and we left the next

morning at six o'clock. We had a very pleasant tour along the banks of the Usk and Wye and into Brecknockshire".²⁵ Their excuse was to pay a visit to Thelwall who had settled down with his family at a farmhouse at Llysen near Brecon, but we can hardly doubt that its greatest delight lay in showing to Coleridge that beautiful country about Tintern Abbey which had lately inspired Wordsworth. Before the end of the month they had started for Germany. Coleridge had decided to leave his wife and family at Nether under the care of the faithful Poole, and he brought with him as a companion a young man called Chester. London was reached on the twenty-seventh after a pleasant journey, they left there on September 14, and reached Yarmouth by noon the following day.²⁶

I have spent so much time on this period at Alfoxden because while Dorothy's influence upon her brother began much earlier, it is during these days that her influence on Coleridge was at its height. Dorothy loved Coleridge as she loved William with a something more than sisterly affection. Up to this time William had been her whole life and the passionate devotion she had given him had been his saving grace. Now Coleridge first because he inspired William and later, for his own sake was the recipient of this same wholehearted love. At best Coleridge was a lonesome soul, and in this atmosphere of love and appreciation, his whole nature expanded. But it was

26. DeSelincourt, op, cit. pp. 88-90.

morning at six o'clock. We had a very pleasant tour along the banks of the Uss and into Breckenridge. Their excuse was to pay a visit to Thelwell who had settled down with his family at a farmhouse at Lyons near Brecon, but we can hardly doubt that the greatest delight lay in showing to Coleridge that beautiful country about Eglwys Talley which had lately inspired Wordsworth. Before the end of the month they had started for Germany. Coleridge had decided to leave his wife and family at Nether under the care of the Talley. Poole, and he brought with him as a companion a young man called Chester. London was reached on the twenty-seventh after a pleasant journey, they left there on September 1st, and reached Yarmouth by noon the following day.²⁸

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not only the affection which she gave him which helped Coleridge. As has been seen, her keen perceptions and deep appreciation of all aspects of Nature helped him to view the world in a new light. And Coleridge in his poems returned in full measure the love and devotion of Dorothy. To her it must have been a great satisfaction to know that Coleridge's best work was done during those happy days at Alfoxden.

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CHAPTER VI

Germany and Sockburn

On September 16, 1798, Chester, Coleridge, William and Dorothy set sail for Hamburg. Wordsworth's original intention was to spend two years in Germany learning the language and making scientific studies, but the visit lasted only six months and, indeed, his contact with Germans during his stay was slight and unimportant. Unlike Coleridge, who was expansively sociable, Wordsworth, particularly when he was companioned by Dorothy kept much to himself. It is true that at Hamburg he had several lengthy talks with the poet Klopstock, but this, as far as we know, was the only occasion on which he enjoyed any intercourse with a German of Distinction. It was characteristic, too, that one of the first things he did at Hambrug^{ur} was to buy Percy's "Reliques" at an English bookstore. And certainly the remarkable group of poems which he composed in Germany owed far more in spirit to Percy than they did to his surroundings.

The Wordsworths, however, did not stay long in Hamburg, and realizing that they could never learn German, so long as Coleridge was there to talk in English, they decided to part. He set out for Ratzeburg to expand joyously in the sunshine of German sentiment and speculation while Dorothy and William after two days of wretched travelling arrived at Goslar, which proved to be a dull, dreary town. The people were inhospitable and William had little opportunity of speaking German except

CHAPTER VI

Germany and Scotland

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with members of the household in which they lived. It was a miserable winter for William, but it was an unexpectedly productive one. The gospel of Nature which he had preached so happily in the previous spring had already failed him when put to the test of a bitter winter in a strange land. Again it was Dorothy's presence which saved him. She was his only source of inspiration and joy.

On one of the coldest days of the year when the stove seemed most inadequate he delighted her by writing,

"I

Can draw warmth from the cheek of my love
As blest and as glad, in this desolate gloom
As if green summer grass were the floor of my room
And woodbines were hanging above.¹

Dorothy's heart lighted up, too, when letters came from Coleridge telling them how much he missed them, even though he had been lucky in Ratzeburg and had been able to make many pleasant acquaintances very quickly. When he sent some hexameters to William for criticism he added, "You have all in each other; but I am lonely and want you."² How much he wanted and needed them now, not even Coleridge himself realized, but it was good for the Wordsworths to know that the close sweet bond was unbroken.

1. Wordsworth op. cit. "Written in Germany" p. 122 Lines 26-30
2. S.T.C. to W.W. - 1798

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Under Dorothy's influence Wordsworth began to feel again the creative urge which had driven him at Alfoxden. Once more he was seeking to find words for some of the experience of those days. It was now that he wrote his unique ballad, "Lucy Gray", founded on a story, which Dorothy had told him long ago, about the little girl lost at Sterne Mill Bridge. Now, too, he wrote his most precious lyrics to "Lucy". What the source of these lovely little poems was, we do not know. Professor Harper and M. Legouis have both suggested it might have been an episode in his early life, but it is certain, and Dorothy could not fail to realize it, that much of their feeling sprang from his devotion to her. He crystallized with exquisite simplicity and tenderness his love of her as a pure flower of Nature, doomed like all such flowers to die into the Nature in which they have lived so beautifully. Regardless of theories we do know that "Louisa" and "The Glow-worm" were both inspired by Dorothy, and, it is possible that the whole group may have been simply an expression of his passionate attachment to her.

Coleridge said also that the sublime epitaph,

"A slumber did my spirit seal,"³

had been prompted by the thought of Dorothy's death. The exquisite lines on the education of the child fromed by Nature to be a lady of her own,⁵ which precede the epitaph are clearly

3. Wordsworth op. cit. "A Slumer Did My Spirit Seal" p. 113

5. Ibid "Three Years She Grew" p. 133.

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2. Wordsworth op. cit. "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" p. 113.
3. Ibid "Three Years She Grew" p. 115.

connected with Dorothy in thought and feeling.⁴

Thus, fruitfully for William, and happily for Dorothy, passed their five months seclusion at Goslar. About the middle of February they started out for Nordhausen through the Hartz forest, finally reaching there on the twenty-seventh of the month and for another two months they rambled about Germany. Towards the end of April they passed a day or two with Coleridge at Gottingen, where he had gone from Ratzeburg. He seemed to feel less the solace of their coming than a kind of pang at the closeness of their union. As he talked with them, his loneliness became a torment. He accompanied them, when they left, five miles out of town. They were infected by his sadness, his uncertainty and the obscure trouble which was overwhelming him. He would make no plans for the future, and when, at last, he turned back, Dorothy's heart filled with pain and anxiety and William had tears in his eyes. It was almost as if brother and sister realized what sorrow lay ahead for their dearest friend.

William's one wish now was to get back to England and Dorothy was as impatient as he. They went to Hamburg by diligence and down the Elbe to Cuxhaven where they embarked. They were well content to be returning because they were to spend the next few months in the pleasantest place they knew, the great farm at Sockburn-on-Tees. They were both anxious to

4. Fausset op. cit. pp. 245-260.

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see Mary Hutchinson and on landing, made for there directly and settled down to enjoy the summer.

Coleridge arrived in England at the end of June but no one heard from him until the news that William was dangerously ill roused him from his silence, and on October 26, he appeared at Sockburn, and, as was his wont, made a rapid conquest of all hearts. At once he realized the love of William and Mary, and Mary became, like Dorothy his "sister". His insatiable craving for love and sympathy drew him irresistibly to Sara Hutchinson and at this time, began that fervid passion that of all his many loves went the deepest and lasted longest.

Soon after Coleridge's arrival, William recovered and the two friends joined by John Wordsworth, returned from one of his distant cruises, started on a walking tour of the Lake country. William who had always loved Grasmere found a small house vacant there and, after consulting Dorothy, rented it and before the end of the year William and Dorothy were settled in their new home at Dove Cottage.⁶

6. DeSelincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth pp. 100-108.

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CHAPTER VII

Dove Cottage

Dove Cottage, the unpretentious little house, which became the first Grasmere home of William and his sister in those days when they were still sole companions is still standing. It is situated on the right of the highway, just on the entry into Grasmere, on the road from Rydal, the old coach road, a little distance beyond the "Wishing Gate" and at the part of the village called Town End. It overlooks from the front the beautiful lake of Grasmere and behind is a small garden and orchard in which is a spring of pure water, round which the primroses and daffodils bloom. Altogether it was an ideal place for the enthusiastic young couple. From the orchard are views almost unrivalled of mountain, vale, and lake embracing the extensive range from Helm Cray and the vales of Easedale and Wythburn, down to the wooded heights of Loughrigg. Words cannot do justice to the idyllic sweetness and beauty of this poet's home, as it must have been when Wordsworth described his chosen retreat as the

"Loveliest spot that man hath ever found."¹

Wordsworth's satisfaction at finding himself, at length, in this his first permanent peaceful abode is expressed in "The Recluse". It will be observed that the poet's ardent

1. Wordsworth op. cit.

attachment to his sister was in no degree abated, and that he ungrudgingly bestowed on her the generous praise which she deserved.

"On Nature's invitation do I come,
By Reason sanctioned, Can the choice mislead
That made the calmest, fairest spot on earth,
With all its unappropriated good
My own, and not mine only, for with me
Entrenched - say rather, peacefully embowered --
Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,
A younger orphan of a home extinct,
The only daughter of my parents dwells;
Aye, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir;
Pause upon that, and let the breathing frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.
Oh, if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then
Shall gratitude find rest? Mine eyes did ne'er
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thought,
But either she, whom now I have, who now
Divides with me that loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
Or an unseen companionship, a breath

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Fix on a lovelier object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thought,
But either she, whom now I love, who now
Mingles with me that loved none, was there,
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned,
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
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Or fragrance independent of the wind.²

The early years at Grasmere were signalized by calm enjoyment no less than active industry. Dorothy's life retained its characteristic unselfishness and its devoted ministry. Though they were still poor it did not detract from their happiness but probably served to promote it. Dorothy was engaged very much in domestic duties, doing a considerable part of the work about the house without a thought of discontent. Her poetic enthusiasm and cultured mind did not unfit her for the common duties of life or detract from her high sense of duty and service. Notwithstanding, however, her other duties, Dorothy found time to help William. As his amanuensis she wrote or transcribed his poems, read to him, and accompanied him on his daily walks. She had also that rare gift of the perfect companion of being able to be silent with and for him.³

Coleridge joined them for a month in the spring of 1800, and at the end of June he had returned bringing his wife and little Hartley to stay till July 23, then he moved on to Greta Hall, Keswick, where the Wordsworths had found a house for him. Thus the old intimate life was resumed. Daily intercourse, as at Alfoxden, was not possible, for they were separated by thirteen miles of mountain road; but if their meetings were not

2. Ibid The Recluse p. 222 Lines 70-94

3. Lee op. cit. pp. 73-77.

Or experience independent of the mind.²

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2. Ibid. The Recluse p. 222 lines 70-84
3. See op. cit. pp. 73-77.

so frequent, they were more prolonged, lasting, as a rule, several days. When they were parted letters passed daily between them, but at any hour Coleridge might burst in upon them and he was always welcome. Additions to the forthcoming "Lyrical Ballads" or other verse written since his last visit must be read to him and the new "Preface" now in the process of composition had to be discussed. And if, too seldom, he brought with him a fresh poem of his own, his talk, at least was alive with poetic suggestion. The following entries in Dorothy's "Journal" are typical:

"Aug. 31(1800). At 11 o'clock Coleridge came, when I was walking in the still clear moonshine in the garden. He came over Helvellyn. Wm. was gone to bed, and John also.¹ We sate and chatted till half-past three, Wm. in his dressing gown. C. read us a part of "Christabel". Talked much about the mountains etc. etc.

September 1. We walked in the wood by the lake. W. read 'Joanna' and the 'Firgrove' to Coleridge. They bathed. The morning was delightful, with something of an autumnal freshness. After dinner Coleridge discovered a rock-seat in the orchard. Cleared away the brambles. Coleridge obliged to go to bed after tea The evening somewhat frosty and grey but very pleasant. I broiled Coleridge a mutton chop, which he ate in bed. Wm. was gone to bed. I chatted with John⁴ and C till

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Oct. 4. Coleridge came in while we were at dinner, very wet. We talked till twelve o'clock. He had sate up all the night before writing essays for the newspapers ... Exceedingly delighted with second part of 'Christabel'.

Oct. 5. Coleridge read 'Christabel' a second time; we had increasing pleasure. A delicious morning. Wm. and I were employed all the morning in writing an addition to the 'Preface' Wm. went to bed, very ill after working after dinner

Oct. 6. A rainy day. Coleridge intending to go, did not get off. We walked after dinner to Rydale. After tea read 'The Pedlar'. Determined not to print 'Christabel' with the L.B."⁵

But the joy which Coleridge brought to brother and sister was soon to be tempered with keenest sorrow. On Dec. 20, (1800) is the significant entry "Coleridge came. Very ill, rheumatic, feverish. Rain incessantly"⁶ With all his immense vitality, and his capacity for spasmodic bursts of physical energy, Coleridge's health had never been robust. An acute attack of rheumatic fever in his schooldays left him with a constitutional tendency to all illls aggravated by a damp climate. This had been the reason for his addiction to opium. He had taken the drug in the Nether Stowey days without harmful results; but now, reading in a medical journal that laudanum was an infallible

5. Journals op. cit. pp. 47,48,52.

6. Ibid op. cit. p. 60

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remedy for swellings of the knee, he had regular recourse to it, and rapidly became its slave. This disastrous habit destroyed a will already weak by nature, and engendered deceit and suspicion of others, which gradually undermined his relations with his dearest friends.

With the wreckage of his physical health came the growing discord of his home life. His marriage, for which Southey and pantisocracy had been largely responsible, had brought him little happiness except for the love of this little son, Hartley, William and Dorothy were not as close to him as they had been at Alfoxden and he realized more and more how empty his married life was. In Sara Hutchinson, too, he had found the sympathy and complete understanding that he missed at his own hearth. Naturally Mrs. Coleridge noticed all this and when he was at home made his life a torment by her reproaches. In a letter written to Mary Hutchinson in April, 1801 Dorothy tells her of Coleridge's distress and the depth of their sympathy for him.⁷

In November of 1801 Coleridge went to London to work for "The Morning Post". In Dorothy's "Journal" we read how anxious and sorry she was for Coleridge at this time. Coleridge wrote them the most gloomy letters from London although his health did not appear to be in too desperate condition and he seemed to take delight in arousing their pity. In the following March he reappeared at Grasmere and Dorothy remarks in her "Journal" how strange and half stupefied he seemed. After Coleridge went

7. D.W. to M.H. April 27th 1801

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to bed, she and William sat up late and it was then she learned for the first time of Coleridge's slavery to opium. Later in the month he visited them again and repeated "the verses he wrote to Sara" which were the first version of the "Ode to Dejection" truly heartbreaking in their revelation of his weakness and mental suffering. But in the company of William and Dorothy he could still forget his troubles and they had many happy meetings during the summer.

The tender affection with which Dorothy writes of Coleridge had led some readers to conclude that he held first place in her heart and that a frustrated passion for him was the secret tragedy of her life. That Dorothy loved Coleridge with a depth of devotion of which few human beings are capable and that his later deterioration under the influence of opium was the most harrowing sorrow of her life, cannot be questioned; but if her life had its tragedy, it was not that she loved Coleridge, but rather that her passion for her brother was so intense as to preclude her from feeling for any man an emotion which would have satisfied the physical as well as the spiritual side of her nature. Coleridge himself must have realized this absorption in William: frank and open as she was, she could not have concealed from him the character of her feeling for either of them. As we have already seen her influence upon both his writings and his life was the result of her love for him as a brother, just a little less dear than William.⁸

8. DeSelincourt op. cit. pp. 110-132

to her, she and William sat up late and it was then she learned for the first time of Coleridge's slavery to opium. Later in the month he visited them again and repeated "the verses he wrote to Sara" which were the first version of the "Ode to Infection" truly breathtaking in their revelation of his weakness and mental suffering. But in the company of William and Dorothy he could still forget his troubles and they had many happy meetings during the summer.

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In speaking of the "Journals" of Dorothy Wordsworth written during the years 1801-1803 Professor Knight remarked, "These journals were a singularly interesting record of plain living and high thinking" of very plain living, and of very lofty thought, imagination, and feeling. They were the best possible commentary on the poems belonging to that period; because they showed the manner of life of brother and the sister, the character of their daily work, the influences of Nature to which they were subjected, the homeliness of their ways, and the materials on which the poems were based, as well as the sources of their inspiration. One reads in these journals the tales of travelling sailors and pedlars who came through the lake country, of gipsy women and beggar boys, which were afterward, if not immediately, translated into verse. Then the whole scenery of the place and its accessories, the people of Grasmere Vale, Wordsworth's neighbors and friends, were photographed in that journal. The Church, the lake, its Island, John's Grove, White Moss Common, Point Rash Judgment, Easedale, Dunmail Raise -- everything given in clearest outline and vivid color. Dorothy's delineations of Nature in these daily jottings were quite as subtle and minute, quite as delicate and ethereal, as anything in her brother's poems. One sees, too, the sister's rare appreciation of her brother's genius, amounting almost to a reverence for it; and her continuous self-sacrifice that she might foster and develop her brother's powers. Another interesting fact disclosed in those journals was the very slow

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All this time visits and communications to Sockburn had been frequent through no formal engagement between William and Mary seemed to have been made. In October, 1801, the preliminaries of peace with France were opened. During the last three months of the year the Hutchinsons were at Grasmere and in February and March, Annette and William were in correspondence. On July 8th, after the Treaty of Amiens had been signed, William and Dorothy started on a trip to France. Here they met Annette and she was only too glad to grant William the freedom which she now desired as much as he.¹⁰

The sonnet on Westminster Bridge which was an outcome of this trip shows only too clearly the connection between William's poetry and Dorothy's prose. In her journal she writes "left London between five and six o'clock of the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's with the river -- a multitude of boats -- made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand

⁹. Lee op. cit. pp. 80-82

¹⁰. Burra op. cit. pp. 92-93

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All this time visits and communications to Beckford had been frequent through an informal engagement between William and Mary seemed to have been made. In October, 1801, the preliminary of peace with France were opened. During the last three months of the year the Hutchinsons were at Farnham and in February and March, Annette and William were in correspondence. On July 8th, after the Treaty of Amiens had been signed, William and Dorothy started on a trip to France. Here they met Annette and she was only too glad to greet William the freedom which she now desired as much as he.¹⁰

The sunset on Westminster Bridge which was an outcome of this trip shows only too clearly the connection between William's poetry and Dorothy's prose. In her journal she writes "left London between five and six o'clock of the morning, outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's with the river -- a multitude of boats -- made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand

spectacles"¹¹

The sonnet goes:

"Earth hath not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty;
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep
And all that mighty heart is lying still."¹²

On October 4, 1802, William Wordsworth and Mary Hutchinson were married and it was in a spirit of tranquill happiness that Dorothy welcomed Mary to the home at Grasmere. To attain it was a triumph of spirit which those only can realize who have entered with imaginative sympathy into her emotions of the last five years. But she had her reward in a love only less wonderful than that which she inspired in William. For half a century

11. Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth Book II ppl 144-145

12. Wordsworth Westminster Bridge p. 284.

11 "Spectacles"

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she was to live with Mary under the same roof, and in the same devoted service. In Mary she had a friend who knew what William was to her, and, with an unselfishness no less than her own, was ready to share husband, children, all that was most precious.¹³

Thus William's marriage only introduced into the circle another kindred spirit and did not to any extent deprive him of the society of his sister. Wordsworth was indeed fortunate to have these two high-souled and appreciative women to encircle him with their love and minister to him, to stimulate to lofty thought and high endeavor, what wonder that his life and work attained a fulness and completion seldom reached?

Now that Dorothy had the constant companionship of Mary she had less inclination to write in her "Journals" and her correspondence becomes once more the chief source of our information. To Jane she wrote less often, her fullest and most intimate letters were now to Mrs. Clarkson, to whom, as the friend also of William and Coleridge, and more over, one who knew and loved the dear Lake country she could pour out readily all that concerned her. They had met soon after Dorothy was settled at Dove Cottage, but their friendship dated from about a year later and their intimacy had been of rapid growth because of Mrs. Clarkson's great admiration for William's poetry.

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13. Lee, Dorothy Wordsworth p. 103.

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letters to Mrs. Clarkson we discover her love and enjoyment of the new arrival. In fact for many years to come, Johnny, and the sisters and brothers that followed him into the world, were a theme upon which Dorothy was most voluble. To Dorothy, as to many others of nervous, anxious temper the baby brought a sense of healing calm and made her forget her anxieties about her brother and Coleridge.

About this time Sir George and Lady Beaumont, who were prominent figures among the London intelligentsia, had come to Keswick and taken rooms in the unoccupied part of Greta Hall. For a few days Sir George disliked Coleridge intensely, but then fell a victim of his elequence and Coleridge became attached to him and his charming wife. Naturally the Beaumonts heard of Wordsworth and before he left, Sir George bought a small property at Applethwaite at the foot of Skiddaw to present to Wordsworth where he and Coleridge might be together. The plan was not fulfilled, but Dorothy was deeply affected by the generous impulse that had prompted it and she and Lady Beaumont began a correspondence which lasted for three years before they met.¹⁴

14. De.Selincourt, op. cit. pp. 152-160

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CHAPTER VIII

Tour in Scotland

About the middle of August, Dorothy, William, and Coleridge set off on their memorable six weeks tour of Scotland. Of the daily incidents of this journey and the impressions and reflections caused by it, Dorothy has given us an excellent account. The manner of their travelling was altogether in keeping with the humble character of their lives. The Irish car and the ancient steed were not calculated to afford much luxury and ease, but they did not intend a fashionable holiday. Their very love of Nature drew them to her wildest solitudes to woo her in her various moods, As they were harvesting for future memories the deep experiences and lingering harmonies which are reaped by a loving companionship with Nature; it mattered little to them that these were frequently obtained at the cost of weariness and discomfort.

No one could have been a more fitting companion for William than Dorothy. She not only idolized him from the depth of her warm and tender heart, but her mind was, as always, sympathetic with his own, and with a kindred enthusiasm for everything which they saw. Her splendid health, also, at this time, and strength of limb made her such a comrade that this tour became to them an enduring joy to be remembered all their lives.

In Dorothy's account of this tour her quickness of observation is very striking. Nothing seemed to escape her notice.

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In Dorothy's account of this tour her quickness of observation is very striking. Nothing seemed to escape her notice.

It was not only the general aspect of Nature in both storm and sunshine, and the diversity of scenes, that spoke to them, but Dorothy's eye took in the most minute objects. She was alive to those subtle influences which serve to impart so much to any journey of circumstance. She took with her a warm loving heart, full, for all with whom she came in contact, of the milk of human kindness. She was grateful for little attentions given or favors bestowed, and touched by those traits of humanity which makes the whole world kin.

Going by way of Carlisle, the small party entered Scotland near Gretna and proceeded by Dumfries and the Vale of Nith. At Dumfries, the grave and home of Robert Burns had a melancholy interest for them, Dorothy saying that "there is no thought surviving of Burns's life that is not heart depressing."¹

On leaving the valley of the Nith, they felt that they were indeed in Scotland. Dorothy's record is filled with delightful descriptions of the country and the people they met. Of the falls of the Clyde she writes "We had been told that Cartland Craggs were better worth going to see than the falls of Clyde. I do not think so; but I have seen rocky dells resembling these before, with clear water instead of that like the falls of the Clyde. It would be a delicious spot to have near one's house..."²

The Highlands were entered at Lock Lomond, of which she

1. Journals op. cit. p. 68

2. Ibid op. cit. p. 199.

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The Highlands were entered at Loch Lomond, of which she

1. Journals op. cit. p. 55.
2. Ibid. op. cit. p. 122.

says, "One a splendid evening, with the light of the sun diffused over the whole islands, distant hills, and the broad expanse of the lake, with its creeks, bays, and little slips of water among the islands, it must be a glorious sight to see."³

Coleridge stayed with them for only the first two weeks of their trip. On this occasion he did not seem to have been the desirable companion of old. Wordsworth said of him that at that time he was in bad spirits, and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection.

Many extracts might be taken from this admirable and fascinating book of Dorothy's, but it must be read to be fully appreciated. William and she received impressions not only from the natural scenery, but, also, from the simple-minded and hospitable Highlanders, with whom they met from time to time. They were so delighted with two Highland girls, in their fresh, youthful beauty, whom they met at the ferry at Inverneyede that Wordsworth made them the subject of a poem, "To a Highland Girl"⁴. Dorothy says, "At this day the innocent merriment of the girls, with their kindness to us, and the beautiful face and figure of the elder, come to my mind whenever I think of the ferry-house and the waterfall of Loch Lomond; and I never think of the two girls but the whole image of that romantic spot is before me -- a living image, as it will

3. Ibid p. 223

4. Wordsworth op. cit. p. 297.

be to my dying day".⁵ The brother's poem is hardly more poetic than the sister's prose.

In a somewhat primitive way, and having to contend with bad roads, accidents to their car and sometimes hard lodgings and scanty fare, they managed to cover the greater part of the country, taking in on their way; Inveray, Glen Coe, Loch Tay, the Pass of Killiecrankie, Dunkeld, Callander, back by the Trossachs to Loch Lomond and Edinburgh. Approaching Loch Lomond for the second time, Dorothy remarked that she felt it much more interesting to visit a place where they had been before than it could possibly be for the first time. By the lakes they met two women, without hats, but neatly dressed who seemed to have been taking their Sunday evening's walk. One of them said in a soft, friendly voice "What, you are stepping westward?" She adds "I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun".⁶ Later came William's poem "Stepping Westward" which the incident inspired.

Not the least memorable part of this tour was a visit to Sir, then Mr. Walter Scott, who was then unknown to fame as a novelist, but who was clever, amiable, and universally respected.⁷ They also met Rogers in a chance encounter on the road and years later he recalls how he fell in with Wordsworth, Miss Wordsworth,

6. Journals op. cit.

7. Lee op. cit. pp. 107-125.

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and Coleridge who were at the same time making a tour in a vehicle that looked like a cart. Wordsworth and Coleridge were entirely occupied in talking about poetry; and the whole care of looking out for cottages where they might get refreshment and pass the night, as well as of seeing their poor horse fed and littered, devolved upon Miss Wordsworth. She was a delightful person, so full of talent, so simpleminded and so modest.⁸ This report is only another example of the way Dorothy assumed the responsibility of looking after the material wants of life in order to free Coleridge and William of any responsibility beyond their writings.⁹

This tour was rich in results, not only in Dorothy's recollections of it but also in the poems of her brother which managed to preserve the true Highland spirit. From almost every angle the Scottish tour was a success, and, were it not for Coleridge's defection, it would have been perfect.

8. S. Rogers Table Talk ed. Dyce 1887 pp. 208-9
9. DeSelincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth p. 172.

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CHAPTER IX

Separation from Coleridge

William and Dorothy were delighted to get home once more and fully enjoyed the autumn season at Grasmere when the beauty of the country side was at its height. Coleridge, however, was a constant source of worry to them. He visited at Grasmere in December and was taken so ill that he was forced to be in bed for three weeks where he was lovingly nursed by Dorothy and Mary. He decided that the only thing which would restore his health was a stay in some warmer climate and on his departure he was making plans to spend some time in Malta.

From Grasmere he went to London and from there to visit his good friends, the Beaumonts. In a letter from there he sent a request for all of William's manuscript poems and it did not fall on deaf ears, for their one desire was that, even in absence, Coleridge should still share with them the best part of their life. Ever since he had left, William had been hard at work on that poem in which "as if to see thee alone in private talk"¹ he related the history of his mind, to that friend, "who in my thoughts is ever at my side."² For the next few weeks every spare moment was spent in copying. The task proved more exacting than anticipated. But by March sixth, Dorothy is able to report to Coleridge that "we have transcribed

1. Wordsworth op. cit. "Prelude"

2. Ibid

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all of William's smaller poems for you, and begun the poem of his life and 'The Pedlar'"³ and then goes on to give him the intimate details of their cottage life. For another fortnight the fevered copying went on, and the date of Coleridge's departure drew nearer and Dorothy's fears increased, lest the precious volumes should not be ready for him in time; her mind was not at ease until she heard of their safe arrival in London.

"Thinking of his banishment" she wrote to Mrs. Clarkson "his loneliness, the long distance he will be from all the human beings that he loves, it is one of my greatest consolations that he has those poems with him."⁴

Again we have proof of Dorothy's unselfish devotion to Coleridge. Nothing was too much work which would help him and make the time pass more quickly. It was a love which gave everything and demanded nothing and to her Coleridge owed an irriparable debt.

On April ninth, he left Portsmouth in the Speedwell, bound for Malba. On the fourteenth Dorothy opened a correspondence with Lady Beaumont ostensibly to thank her for the gift of a cask of ale, but her real theme was their dear absent friend. Before she had finished her letter the post arrived with a farewell missive from Coleridge "concluded in the moment when the ship was going to sail." It was like another parting to us" she added. "when we were assured that the last step was taken,

4. D.W. to C.C. Mar. 24, 1804

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that he is now really gone" And it would have been well for them all had this parting been the last for that same Coleridge with whom, for the last eight years, they had lived in rarest intimacy, "three persons with one soul" was never to return.⁵

William had visited at Dove Cottage, John had paid them a long visit of eight months. A kinship of thought and feeling added to some natural affinities bound these three persons in mutual love more than usually devoted. Coleridge had said of John, "your brother John is one of you -- a man who hath solitary workings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a poetic heart, and self instinct of true beauty". Dorothy was particularly affected by John's death. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth wrote, "I shall be all in my power to sustain my sister under her sorrow, which is, and long will be, bitter and poignant. We did not love him as a brother merely, but as a man of original mind, and as honest to all about him. Oh! dear friend, forgive us for talking thus. We have had no tidings of Coleridge: I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart, and his poor body cannot bear sorrow. He loved my mother and he knew how to be at Gramscote loved him."⁶

Early in November of 1835, Dorothy and William started off on a week's tour to explore the Ulster region. Dorothy

5. De Selincourt D. Wordsworth pp 172-179

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CHAPTER IX

Life at Grasmere

The death by drowning of John Wordsworth in February, 1805, was a great sorrow to the Wordsworth family. After Dorothy and William had settled at Dove Cottage, John had paid them a long visit of eight months. A kinship of thought and feeling added to warm natural affections bound together these three persons in mutual love more than usually devoted. Coleridge had said of John, "Your brother John is one of you -- a man who hath solitary usings of his own intellect, deep in feeling, with a subtle tact, and swift instinct of true beauty". Dorothy was particularly affected by John's death. In a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth writes, "I shall do all in my power to sustain my sister under her sorrow, which is, and long will be, bitter and poignant. We did not love him as a brother merely, but as a man of original mind, and an honor to all about him. Oh! dear friend, forgive me for talking thus. We have had no tidings of Coleridge. I tremble for the moment when he is to hear of my brother's death; it will distress him to the heart, and his poor body cannot bear sorrow. He loved my brother and he knows how we at Grasmere loved him."¹

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Early in November of 1905, Dorothy and William started off on a week's tour to explore the Ulster region. Dorothy wrote a Journal of this tour as she had of the one in Scotland and it has her same vivid beauty of feeling and expression that

characterizes all her work. It is on this trip that William got the inspiration for one of the finest passages in "The Excursion" when he heard the story of an old man who when lost in a storm found shelter in the remains of a chapel at Patterdale. Perhaps the most enjoyable part to Dorothy was their trip to Brougham Castle where she had spent so much time in her childhood. So the companionship of brother and sister continued. Despite all other ties which held him, Wordsworth never found anyone who could take the place of his beloved Dorothy.

In 1806, Sara Hutchinson came to Grasmere and for the rest of her life was to make her home with the Wordsworths. Mary was her favorite sister, Dorothy, her closest friend, and her chief interests and sympathies were bound up with theirs.

In the meantime they were much worried about Coleridge whom they had been expecting since the previous May, but it was not until August fifteenth that they heard he had arrived in Portsmouth. It was not until the latter part of September, however, that they heard from Mrs. Coleridge that he was expected in Keswick, but they finally left for Coleorton where they had been invited by the Beaumonts without seeing him. However, they met him at Kendal and were shocked and saddened at the change in him. He was like a different person. But at Christmas time he arrived at Coleorton with little Hartley and stayed for two months. Dorothy was very happy to have his companionship once more, and, when in the evenings that followed, William read aloud the poem written to Coleridge during his

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William read aloud the poem written to Coleridge during his

absence and around them was the happy circle of beloved faces, Mary, Dorothy, and Sara, it seemed as if they were taking up the old life of comradeship. But this was not to be. A change had come over Coleridge.

"A sense of past youth and manhood come in vain

And genius given, and knowledge won in vain."¹

Over-indulgence in alcohol and narcotics had begun to undermine his affections and to play havoc with his moral sense and he was subject to moods in which love and gratitude were crossed with resentment and jealousy. In his private note books to which he committed his thoughts are fears and suspicions which make pitiful reading. In his friends company he becomes silent, moody, and reticent. William voiced his sense of the change in "A Complaint"

"A well of love -- it may be deep

I trust it is, -- and never dry;

What matter, if the waters sleep

In silence and obscurity,

Such change, and at the very door

Of my fond heart, both made me poor."²

Dorothy felt the change no less deeply. For a time she thought the cause of it was the renewed difficulties with his wife, but, whereas, in the old days the greater Coleridge's distress the more whole-heartedly he sought their sympathy, he now shrank more and more into himself. A few months later Dorothy had to make the bitter confession that they had long

experience at Coleorton that it was not in their power to make him happy.

At the end of February he went off to London to visit Montagu and here William and Mary joined him in April. On his return to Coleorton, William brought Scott with him for a few days visit and on Scott's departure, brother and sister accompanied him part of the way home. In June the whole family set out again for Grasmere and broke the journey for a fortnight at Halifax where Dorothy had great pleasure in renewing old friendships. On their return they found Dove Cottage so crowded that they made arrangements to lease a larger home which would not be ready for six months.

In the November of 1807, DeQuincey paid the Wordsworths his first visit, and his account of it with his description of Dorothy is one of the most trustworthy of his reminiscences. His portrait of Dorothy and the insight which he shows as to her influence on her brother is worthwhile quoting. "Her face was of Egyptian brown; rarely in a woman of English birth had I seen a more determinate Gypsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, nor were they fierce and bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm, and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within

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1. Coleridge To. a Gentleman Stanzas 3 & 4 p. 213
 2. Wordsworth op. cit. "A Complaint" Stanza 3 p. 343

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her --- This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet -- his 'Dorothy' who naturally owed so much to the life-long intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he had acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and worshippers of this great poet, are become equally her debtors -- that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was by its original tendency, too stern too austere, too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was, -- the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracts -- in Highland glens and in the dim recesses of German charcoal burners -- that first couched his eye to the sense of beauty, humanized him by the gentler charities, and ingrafted with her delicate female touch those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks".³

In June, 1808, the Wordsworths moved into Allan Bank, a large new house with commanding views of the lake and valley where, in September, a second daughter was born to Wordsworth. Before the end of the month Coleridge, by now the victim of an elaborate persecution complex had joined them. In the previous February news that he had broken down in London reached Wordsworth

3. DeQuincey Reminiscences pp. 276-278. See also later ed.

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and he hurried there and devoted a month to the thankless task of trying to help him. Since then correspondence had passed which proved that Coleridge was no longer normally responsible for what he wrote; but still persisting in the attempt to save what was still their most treasured friendship, they exposed themselves to bitter criticisms for his sake. For it was clear to them that nothing was so much wanting as the courage finally to separate from his wife, and though aware of the criticism they took the new house partly with the object of giving him a separate home.

Life at Allen Bank was chaotic for there was no income to meet the expense of their larger quarters. "The White Doe of Rylston" was finished, but, in spite of the good reasons urged by Dorothy, William refused to consider its publication. Meanwhile during the last months of the year Coleridge mused over his plans for "The Friend" and Wordsworth was hard at work on the "Convention of Cintra" which was published in May, 1809. "The Friend" appeared at last in June, and continued fitfully till the following March. Sara Hutchinson, who set herself to bear the combined strain of being loved and tormented, took down nearly the whole work at Coleridge's dictation, and when she departed, broken in health, there was little hope of its continuing. In May, 1810 Coleridge returned to his wife at Keswick, in order to be out of the way when Mary gave birth to her third son, William. He passed by Allen Bank in October, on the way to London with the Montagus and a few days later his

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The loss of Coleridge's friendship was a severe blow to Dorothy, for he shared a place in her heart, mind, and interests second only to William's and it was sad, indeed, for her to see their companion of early years dissipating the fine gifts which he possessed and removing himself entirely from their love and influence.

While Wordsworth was still in London his little daughter Catherine died suddenly in her fourth year. Thomas who was six, contracted measles and followed her. These successions of grief did much to age Wordsworth and darken his life and he decided to leave the unhealthily situated rectory where two such unhappy years had been passed.

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4. Durra Wordsworth pp. 111-113.

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CHAPTER XII

Rydal Mount

Rydal Mount was a modest mansion with a beauty of situation and surroundings difficult to equal. The house stood in an elevated position on a plateau on the south side of Neb Scar. On the side of the house was a walk called Upper Terrace and from here the views were exceedingly lovely. Immediately in front was Rothay Valley backed by the richly wooded heights of Loughrigg with Windermere in the distance, a light thrown into the picture in the winter season and in the summer a beautiful feature, changing with every hue of the sky.

From the time of their settling at Rydal Mount the outward life of Dorothy was passed without much change. After the trials which had preceded, life in this pleasant home appears to have been unbroken by sorrow for many years, but we can see from Dorothy's letters that William and his work was still the first objects of her thought and affection. His friends had always been her friends and how fortunate had been the selection. Robert Southey was a frequent visitor, Charles and Mary Lamb when they could be lured from their beloved London stayed with them, and Charles Lloyd became a neighbor and friend. Later De Quincey, the intellectual opium eater, joined their group; Dr. Arnold of Rugby fame settled within stone's throw of Rydal Mount and the Beamonts remained close friends and admirers. Wordsworth's genius attracted some of the finest minds of the

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day and Dorothy was very happy in such company.

In 1820, Dorothy accompanied her brother and his wife, their relatives, the Monkhouses, and Crabbe Robinson on a lengthy tour of the continent. The outcome of this was "Memorials of a Tour on the Continent published by Wordsworth in 1822, a charming record of their journey.¹

After 1826, Dorothy's health failed rapidly and, in 1832, she suffered an attack of brain fever from the effects of which she never fully recovered. From that time on her mind was clouded and all kinds of suggestions and reasons have been given for this breakdown from secret frustration to having worn herself out from too many long walks. But it was not sorrow or tragedy that unhinged her delicately poised mind; it snapped under the strain of having been obliged to support for so long a number of quiveringly intense impressions.²

1. DeSelincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth pp. 160-168

2. Lee p. 187

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CHAPTER XIII

Conclusion

The influence of Dorothy on Wordsworth and Coleridge, as we have seen, was a very important and it is satisfactory to note that both men were aware of it. In a letter to a friend written in August, 1833 Coleridge says, "Dorothy Wordsworth, the sister of our great Poet is a woman of Genius, as well as of manifold acquirements; and but for the absorption of her whole soul in her Brother's fame and writings would perhaps, in a different style, have been as great a poet as himself."¹

She was certainly a woman of genius but she saw herself clearly when she said she was only "half a poet". Poetic feeling she had in abundant measure. Her quicker observation pointed out to Wordsworth and Coleridge things which might have escaped their notice, but theirs was the ability to put it into poetry.²

That Dorothy was in love with Coleridge seems absurd in the light of a close study of their lives. She did her best to advance Coleridge's genius and watched with a breaking heart his degradation brought about by drugs and drink. She witnessed with sorrow the estrangement between her brother and her friend brought up chiefly by unfortunate accident but mainly by Coleridge's suspicions which today would be called a "persecu-

1. S.T.C. to A.S. Aug. 1833.

2. T.Maynard Wordsworth's Exquisite Sister Cath. World Aug.1935.

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tion complex" induced by his habits. She rejoiced in the reconciliation although it proved to be only partial. It is certain that Dorothy was not in love with Coleridge but that rather she loved him as unselfishly as she loved William.

No one appreciated or acknowledged the influence of his sister more freely than Wordsworth. His poetry is filled with expressions of his love and appreciation of her. During his early life, Dorothy played a predominant part in the life of her brother and thus was to a great extent instrumental in introducing the new evangel of song by which that century's literature was uplifted. The elevating presence of such a woman, in the delightful and close relationship of sister, was to a man of Wordsworth's character in itself an inspiration. If it be good to look upon Nature with a reverential eye, seeing therein the Creation of God brought near, then to this poet, as Nature's high priest and interpreter is due the gratitude of all poetry-lovers. As the close companion and stimulator of this great poet during the years of preparation and discipline, we owe it indirectly to Dorothy Wordsworth that Nature has become to us, so much more than she was to our forefathers, has been revealed in a clearer and brighter light; that she speaks to us in a new language, calling us away from the lower cares of life and uplifting us to a higher soul, making us capable of higher good, of nobler endeavor, of capacities for enjoyment before unknown--keener, more satisfying, and more enduring.

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Although Dorothy Wordsworth lived until 1855, and for the last few years was practically an invalid, it is not with thoughts of sadness that our reflections on such a helpful career as hers should be closed. It is better to turn our thoughts away from the intervening period of age and illness. Dorothy Wordsworth should live in our minds as she was in her eager-spirited youth, when in company with her beloved companions, Coleridge and Wordsworth, she bounded over familiar hills and roamed by the mountain streams, a youth of beauty and buoyance and joy, because it was full of love, goodness, generous sympathy, and unselfish devotion.

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DIGEST OF THESIS

The influence of Dorothy Wordsworth on Coleridge and Wordsworth is a very important one. As is only natural, Dorothy's influence on her brother was much greater and covered a much longer period of time, but the years in which Coleridge shared her companionship with William were the years in which Coleridge did his finest work. This influence of Dorothy may be easily traced in a study of her journals, letters written by all three of them, and in the poetry of both Coleridge and Wordsworth.

Dorothy and William were separated in early childhood and it was not until Dorothy was sixteen that, in summer vacations shared at Penrith, she had a brief foretaste of that companionship which was to mean so much to both of them all their lives. William was already beginning to feel the stirrings of his poetic nature and, in Dorothy's company, found he could express himself as he had never before dared. She, recognizing his gift, did her best to stimulate and encourage him and with her deep love of Nature and even quicker perception, she gave him eyes, she gave him ears, as he tells us in a poem recalling their early life together.

After graduating from Cambridge, William spent some time in France and when he returned to England, upset by an unfortunate love affair and horror-stricken by the revolutionary scenes he had witnessed he was a very much disillusioned young man. He accepted an offer of a cottage at Racedown and settled there

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with Dorothy to recover from the misery which he had experienced and witnessed. It was the beginning of a happy and fruitful companionship which was to last all the rest of their lives.

Dorothy had no easy task before her. Her brother was a sick man mentally and she made it her work to win him back to his former happy outlook on life and Nature. It was her exquisite appreciation of everything which her senses perceived which roused in him a like appreciation. In his efforts to give her delight, he found delight, too, and as he says in "The Prelude" she literally saved his soul alive. At this critical period of his life, it was his sister Dorothy who preserved the poet in him.

While at Racedown, Wordsworth met Coleridge and so impressed was he with this brilliant young man that, there and then, began a friendship which was an important factor both in their lives and writings. Each man provided an intellectual stimulus for the other and Dorothy's keen perceptive powers and love of beauty inspired Coleridge as they had inspired her brother. Finally to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey, the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden.

Here began, for the three of them the happiest and certainly, in Coleridge's case, the most productive, period, in their lives. Here it was the 'Lyrical Ballads' were planned and written, the tragedies 'Osorid' and 'The Borderers' finished, and Dorothy's 'Journals' begun. Coleridge calls them "three persons with one soul" and it is an apt description. When they

with Dorothy to recover from the misery which he had experienced and witnessed. It was the beginning of a happy and fruitful companionship which was to last all the rest of their lives. Dorothy had no easy path before her. Her brother was a sick man mentally and she made it her work to win him back to his former happy outlook on life and nature. It was her exquisite appreciation of everything which her senses received which roused in him a like appreciation. In his efforts to give her delight, he found delight, too, and as he says in "The Prelude" she literally saved his soul alive. At this critical period of his life, it was his sister Dorothy who preserved the poet in him.

While at Hecetown, Wordsworth met Coleridge and so impressed was he with this brilliant young man that, there and then, began a friendship which was an important factor both in their lives and writings. Each man provided an intellectual stimulus for the other and Dorothy's keen perceptive powers and love of beauty inspired Coleridge as they had inspired her brother. Finally to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey, the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden.

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were together every impression was heightened, Nature, in all her aspects, had a new beauty and living, in itself was a delight. Certainly they shared a communion of thought. Compare Dorothy's "Journal" with her brother's "A Night-piece" or Coleridge's "Christabel". There is the same appreciation of Nature, the same keen perception, and, at times, the same phraseology. This happy time lasted only about a year but it is a very important year in the history of English literature.

After leaving Alfoxden, Dorothy, William, and Coleridge set out on a trip to Germany and soon after their arrival they parted company in order to learn the language. William and Dorothy went to Gaslar, while Coleridge went to Ratzeburg. Coleridge's ready friendliness helped him to make many contacts, but the Wordsworths were not so fortunate. It was not a very happy winter for them, but Dorothy's presence was, as always, an inspiration to William and it was during this period that he wrote his lovely lyrics the "Lucy" poems, several of which we know are dedicated to Dorothy.

On their return from Germany the Wordsworths settled at Dove Cottage in Grasmere, a delightful location in the lake country, and for the next few years that was their home. Coleridge was only thirteen miles away and there was constant visiting back and forth as before. For awhile their companionship of the old days was resumed but with a difference. Coleridge was rapidly becoming a hopeless victim of the opium habit and, less and less, did he contribute poems of his own to be discussed.

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His excesses were beginning to affect his writing ability. Dorothy's realization of Coleridge's weakness was a great sorrow to her, but she never failed in her interest and love for him. His deterioration was a real tragedy in her life.

In 1802, William married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend of the Wordsworths, and she was a happy addition to the household. Like Dorothy, her first thought was for William and it was under the influence of these two fine women that Wordsworth did his best work. Mary's presence did not spoil his companionship with Dorothy and as in the old days, they still roamed the country together enjoying the beautiful lake region to the fullest.

About a year after William's marriage, Dorothy, Coleridge, and Wordsworth started on their memorable tour of Scotland. Coleridge, however, proved a poor companion and left them at the end of two weeks. Dorothy's "Recollections" of this trip make delightful reading and are truly Wordsworth in prose. Her descriptions of the people whom they met and the places which they visited are as worth reading as the poetry William wrote of this same tour. Wordsworth was as blessed in his sister as he was in his gift of poetry.

After their return from Scotland, friendship with Coleridge was resumed but it was subtly changing. As a result of drugs and alcohol he began to develop a "persecution complex" which resulted in a break with his two dearest friends that was never really mended. Their loss of Coleridge's friendship was a deep

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sorrow to the Wordsworths and it was treatment which they ill-deserved. It was well that they still had each other.

Although Dorothy Wordsworth's later life was overshadowed with gloom and sickness, it is more pleasant to remember her as she was in her youth, roaming the countryside with her two beloved comrades. Because of her influence on Coleridge and Wordsworth, she will always remain an important figure in English literature. London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1909

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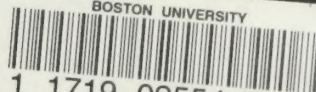
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